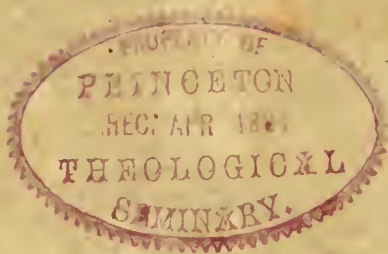


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A  
VINDICATION  
OF THE  
CALVINISTIC DOCTRINES  
OF  
HUMAN DEPRAVITY, THE ATONEMENT,  
DIVINE INFLUENCES, &c.  
IN A SERIES OF  
LETTERS

TO  
*The Rev. T. BELSHAM:*

OCCASIONED BY  
HIS "REVIEW OF MR. WILBERFORCE'S TREATISE."

WITH  
AN APPENDIX

ADDRESSED TO  
*The AUTHOR of "LETTERS ON HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY."*

---

By *THOMAS WILLIAMS,*  
AUTHOR OF THE AGE OF INFIDELITY, &c.

---

The man whose sole spring of action is a concern for lost souls, and a care to preserve the purity of that gospel which alone teaches the most effectual method of their recovery from the power of sin and Satan unto God, will feel an ardour of mind that will prompt him strenuously to oppose all those whom he considers as obstructing his benevolent designs.—I could overlook every thing in a man who, I thought, meant nothing but my everlasting welfare.

---

Dr. PRIESTLEY.

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LONDON:

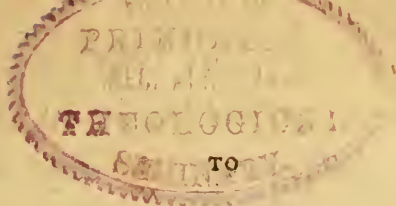
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W. WILBERFORCE, Esq. M. P.

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SIR,

BEFORE I began these Letters, I thought it necessary to enquire whether you had any similar design. Though your assurance to the contrary determined me to proceed, a variety of more pressing engagements retarded the publication. Should it in any degree subserve the cause of Evangelical Religion, those fragments of time which have been redeemed (or perhaps stolen) for the purpose, will not prove misemployed.

Averse as I am to party language, I have not been able wholly to avoid it. The term *Calvinistic*, in particular, has, by various arts, been rendered odious; yet, under this term Unitarian Writers generally comprehend the doctrines of Human

man

man Depravity, the Atonement of Christ, and the Influences of the Holy Spirit, a circumstance which has obliged me to adopt it ; though I am sensible that these truths are no less dear to thousands who do not pass under the denomination of Calvinists.

As the following Defence originated in an attack on your ‘ Practical View,’ you will, I flatter myself, excuse this liberty, and permit me, in addressing the Advocate of Religion and Humanity, the honour and privilege of subscribing myself

Your much obliged,

and most obedient servant,

*August 1, 1799.*

THOMAS WILLIAMS.

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A  
VINDICATION  
OF THE  
*CALVINISTIC DOCTRINES.*

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L E T T E R I.

INTRODUCTORY.

REV. SIR,

ALTHOUGH the avowal and vindication of his religious sentiments is every man's birth-right, yet to appear as the advocate of Mr. Wilberforce, or the opponent of Mr. Belfham, may seem to require some apology. The former character I have not the presumption to assume: it is only accidentally that I have noticed that Gentleman's work, as having occasioned your attack on principles equally dear and important to me as to Mr. W. And with respect to the latter, if there be any

B

temerity

temerity in the attempt, it must arise from my inferiority in the contest, which I shall be quite as willing to admit as you can be to assert ; and if the difference should prove ten-fold in your favour, let it be remembered your advantage is proportionate, and no less so my claim on the candour of the Public.

It is equally favourable to your cause that your sentiments are so flattering to human nature, and so palatable to the taste of this *soi-disant* Age of Reason : and this advantage is the greater if, as you inform us, there are many thousands, both in the church and out of it, who are, at least secretly, on your side \*. A circumstance I am the more ready to believe from what I know of the spread of infidelity.

In addressing your Letters to a *Lady*, you seem desirous to strengthen your interest farther by the patronage of the fair sex, whose influence over us commences with the cradle and the breast, and continues commensurate with the current of our lives. I confess that from my opinion of the piety

\* Review, p. 227.

and intelligence of women (who have been often remarked to have more religion in general, than men), I should have no fear as to the result of an appeal to their judgment; but I am persuaded they have too much modesty to give an award on questions of Theology.

Should it be enquired with what disposition I enter upon this investigation; whether I feel that indifference to sentiment, which some writers consider as a necessary prerequisite to a discovery of truth—an indifference which makes it perfectly the same to me whether my principles on examination prove true or false—I must confess that I am not thus indifferent: I have found that comfort and satisfaction in them, that ‘my heart’s desire and prayer to God is,’ that you, and my readers also, may enjoy the same.—If this should appear unpromising, permit me to ask, What would be thought of an advocate for Natural Religion, who should set out with confessing it a matter of perfect indifference to him, whether or not there were a God, or a divine providence?—But you, Sir, need not be told that a regard to principles may con-

sist with a just sense of our own fallibility, and an openness to conviction by the arguments of an opponent. Whatever others may have advanced, you have, much to your honour, contended for the *importance of religious truth*. On this point, therefore, I may suppose we are agreed; I wish we were equally so as to what is truth.

Before I conclude this letter, permit me to mention one thing which has embarrassed me a little. I hate the illiberality of party names; and yet, in speaking of parties, I am obliged to use them. On my own side I can find no difficulty, you and your friends have furnished me with a variety: we are Trinitarians, Calvinists, Enthusiasts, and Christian Idolators \*. All, or any of these names may do for us; but by what term shall I distinguish the friends of your hypothesis?

The name *Socinian* you disavow; and Socinus would have disavowed you as an heretic, or an infidel; and probably have immured you in a prison †. As to the

\* Review, p. 129, 130.

† Toulmin's Life of Socinus, p. 105.



name *Unitarian*, I am unwilling exclusively to allow it ; because we believe in no more gods than you do ; yet, for distinction's sake, I must be content to adopt this as a *popular* term for your *non-descript* denomination.

It is necessary, however, to observe, that as by using these terms I do not wish to make you answerable for the sentiments of other Unitarian Writers, so neither do I make myself responsible for the opinions of other Calvinists, any farther than I have avowed them. In general, my ideas correspond with those of the great Reformer of Geneva ; but in all parties the shades of difference in opinion are as numerous almost as the individuals who compose them.

Having settled these preliminaries, I shall, for the present, subscribe myself, in the cause of God and truth,

Your humble servant,

T. W.

## LETTER II.

*On the Test of Truth.*

REV. SIR,

**B**EFORE we enter on the investigation of any particular point of faith, it is necessary that we agree upon certain *criteria* as our rule; otherwise we may wrangle without end, but shall make no progress in the search after truth. The only *criteria* I would employ in these Letters are *Reason* and the *Scriptures*.

I suppose we are agreed, that it is the province of *Reason* to judge of the evidences of Revelation, and of its import. I pretend not, any more than yourself, to be an inspired expositor: but being satisfied, after a due examination, that the scriptures commonly received by Protestants are genuine, I use my understanding to investigate their meaning, not without prayer that my faculties may be strengthened in the research, and my judgment chastened by divine instruction

struction. Perhaps you will accompany me in this, if no farther.

Having received full satisfaction on the divine authority of the Bible, I consider myself bound to submit, whenever it appears determinate and clear; without torturing the sacred writers by forced criticism, or conjectural emendation; and without presuming to cull only such precepts or doctrines as are agreeable to my inclination, or within the sphere of my comprehension. To instance in a single point: when I read of the Resurrection of the Dead, I think myself bound to receive it on the authority of the Revealer, altho' utterly incomprehensible, and implying innumerable circumstances totally dissimilar to any thing which I have witnessed; and, in my view, one of the greatest mysteries either in nature or christianity.

I fear we differ widely in our estimation of the *authority* of the sacred writers; but in order to meet you on your own principles, and for the sake of argument, I shall, in these Letters, insist only upon that degree of *authority* which you seem willing to allow them, 'as capable and faithful witnesses,  
' both

‘ Both of the doctrine which Jesus taught;  
 ‘ and of the facts which they relate\*.’

‘ To a critical investigation of the authenticity and translation of particular passages I have no objection ; and am willing (so far as I may be able) to employ all the care you recommend, to discover their ‘ genuine ‘ sense; without taking into consideration ‘ whether it agrees with this, or is repugnant ‘ to that hypothesis of vain and ignorant men, ‘ who strain the apostolic language to the ‘ support of their favourite systems.†.’

But though you acknowledge the Scriptures, critically examined, and rightly understood, to be the test of Truth, and complain of rational christians being ‘ often accused of not paying due respect’ to their ‘ authority‡ ;’ yet I observe, that your manner of criticising is such as to leave very little in them, to which a mutual appeal can be made.

On this principle you might well observe, || that ‘ It would be difficult to prove ‘ that David in his penitential lamentation

\* Review, p. 28.

† Ibid, p. 30.

‡ Ib. p. 26.

|| Ib. p. 43.

‘ over his enormous crime, wrote under a  
 ‘ divine impulse, or that Solomon was super-  
 ‘ naturally endowed with any other than  
 ‘ political wisdom.’ You might have added  
 on this principle, that it would be difficult to  
 prove that one hundreth part of the Bible is  
 inspired. On this ground, one need not be  
 surpris’d at your making no use of it in judg-  
 ing of the divine character, but in the true  
 spirit of infidelity, declaring, that ‘ we have  
 ‘ no satisfactory rule of judging of the cha-  
 ‘ racter of the Deity, but from his operati-  
 ‘ ons\* ;’ in which it is manifest, by what fol-  
 lows, you do not mean to include the Scrip-  
 tures. Farther, you ‘ allow the inspiration of  
 ‘ the writers of the New Testament in no  
 ‘ cases where they do not themselves *express-*  
 ‘ *ly claim* it †.’ This appears to me very  
 unreasonable. An ambassador having pro-  
 duced his credentials, expects to be accredi-  
 ted till he is recalled or superceded: A  
 steward empowered to receive rents, pro-  
 duces his authority on the first demand, but  
 does not expect it to be required every time :  
 A servant empowered to open credits, and

\* Review, p. 32.

† Ibid, p. 28.

receive payments, retains his power while he retains his service, unless his authority be withdrawn. So the apostles were ambassadors, stewards, servants of Jesus Christ, and had a right to be respected in their public character, wherever no intimations are given to the contrary, of which we have some remarkable instances in the Epistles of Paul \*; and these exceptions forcibly confirm the opinion of his writing in general under the influence of inspiration. However, in order to accommodate myself to the weakness of your faith, care shall be taken as to the authority, as well as perspicuity, of the evidence adduced by

Yours, &c.

\* 1 Cor. vii. 6, 10, 13, 25, 26, 40.—xi. 17, &c.



## LETTER III.

*The Scripture Doctrine of the Depravity of Human Nature.*

REV. SIR,

OUR first question relates to a matter of fact. *Is human nature depraved, or not?* A question I should suppose unnecessary with the friends of Revelation, since the evidence of the fact is so full and complete, that it pours around like day-light.

It abounds every where in the sacred writings. MOSES not only gives the history of its origin in the fall, but delivers this sentence, as from God himself, prior to the flood. ‘And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.’ And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and ‘it grieved him at his heart \*.’ As you, Sir, profess yourself a lover of criticism, permit me to remark, that there is an emphasis, not

\* Gen. vi. 5, 6,

only in the words themselves, but in their grammatic form; in the original, the future tense being here used for the preter, or rather the *present* tense (which is deficient in the Hebrew), as often is the case where the sense is not restrained to a particular period; and, if I am not greatly mistaken, this form of speaking denotes the character given to belong to every generation of mankind. For the truth of the proposition however, whether the criticism be admitted or not, we have divine authority; for we find the Lord again declaring, immediately after the flood, that the human heart is still the same: ‘I will not again curse the  
 ‘ ground any more for man’s sake; for the  
 ‘ imagination of man’s heart is evil from  
 ‘ his youth \*.’

DAVID

\* Gen. viii. 21.—Some critics have been nibbling at this text by rendering the particle *כִּי* *although*, instead of *for*; but admitting it sometimes to bear that rendering, there seems no occasion for here departing from its first and primary signification. “I will not add to curse the earth any more (בְּעֹבֹר) on account of man; (כִּי) because the thoughts of the heart of man are evil from his youth.” Here the two Hebrew particles are evidently synonymous; God would not curse the earth any  
 more

DAVID and SOLOMON may be writers of little weight with you. Possibly you will admit, however, that they had some knowledge of human nature, and of their own hearts. The former confesses himself to be ‘shapen in iniquity and conceived in ‘sin \* ;’ and the latter witnesses, that ‘God  
‘made

more *on account* of man—*because* of the wickedness of his heart, &c.

The argument, however, does not rest upon a criticism. Admitting the proposed rendering of *although*, still it supposes the fact, that ‘the thoughts of the heart of man *are* evil from his youth.’

\* Ps. li. 5. Rather, more literally and accurately,

‘Behold, in iniquity was I BORN ;

‘Yea, in sin did my mother CONCEIVE me.’

Mr. Bulkley, in his late Apology for Human Nature, seems to intimate as if this was some misfortune peculiar to David, conveying an oblique reflection on his mother ; but afterwards, as if conscious of this being unfounded, and ashamed of the innuendo, he tries to explain it away in another manner ; as if he had said, ‘Were such a thing *any way possible*, I could even believe myself to have been born with a *propensity to sin*.’ Is not this saying that the Psalmist had felt so strong a propensity to sin that he knew not how otherwise to account for it ? And that, admitting the possibility of original sin, it was certainly the best and only method to solve the problem ? But after all, we are told it is only  
a strong

‘made man upright, but they have fought  
 ‘out many inventions’—‘yea, also the heart  
 ‘of the sons of men is full of evil, and mad-  
 ‘ness is in their heart \*.’

The Prophets, in general, seem deeply affected with this humbling truth; and JEREMIAH, in particular, delivers the following oracle from the mouth of God himself: ‘The heart is deceitful above all  
 ‘things, and desperately wicked; who can  
 ‘know it? I the Lord search the heart  
 ‘and try the reins,’ &c. As if the Lord had said, ‘None but myself, whose prerogative it is to search the heart, can comprehend the depth of its iniquity †.’

JESUS CHRIST himself, whom you admit to be ‘a teacher sent from God,’ expresses the same doctrine, in terms at least equally clear and strong: ‘From within, out of the

a strong poetical or proverbial expression; as if one should say, ‘Surely I was mad—out of my senses, or bewitched!’ A very proper illustration to such a comment, and very much *à propos*! See Bulkley’s Apol. p. 78.—81.

\* Eccles. vii. 29. ix. 3.

† Jer. xvii. 9, 10. ‘Desperately wicked’ **אָנָשׁ רָע** depravity itself.—**אָנָשׁ** *Ensh*, is a man depraved, fallen, mortal.

‘heart,’

‘ heart,’ says he, not pointing to any individual, but to the species—‘ Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man \*.’

Once more, PAUL, the disciple of Gamaliel, but who afterward received his doctrine from the Lord himself †, gives the following account of the state of human nature; part of which being quoted from the Psalms, unites the authority of the Prophet with that of the Apostle. Speaking ‘ both of Jews and Gentiles,’ Paul says, ‘ They are all under sin.’—‘ As it is written, “ there is none righteous; no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way; they are altogether become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Then, after enumerating particulars, he says, ‘ Now we know that what things soever the law

\* Mark, vii. 21—23.

† Gal. i. 1, 12.

‘ faith,



‘ faith, it faith to them that are under the  
 ‘ law : that EVERY MOUTH may be stopped,  
 ‘ and ALL THE WORLD become guilty be-  
 ‘ fore God \*.’

Now, Sir, will you permit me to place

\* Rom. iii. 9---19. Though I have not inserted it in the text, I am much inclined to admit the suggestion of a friend, that by those who ‘ are under the ‘law,’ Paul intended the Israelites, in distinction from the world; and that he meant to reason from the depravity of that chosen nation to that of the whole world. Having in the first chapter proved the Gentiles to be wicked in the extreme: the only exception that could be pleaded was that of the Jews.----Are they no better? He allows, chap. ii. that they had greater advantages than the others, in being favoured with a divine Revelation, &c. yet did they not practice what they knew, nor did the goodness of God lead (or influence) them unto repentance, ver. 17---23. Chap. iii. he then asks, where is the difference between Jew and Gentile? They differ in advantages, but not in character. Hear their own scriptures, ver. 9---18. These things are not said of ignorant heathens, but of God’s own nation; for what the law, or Jewish scripture faith, it faith to those that are under the law, *i. e.* to the Jews: and if they are thus depraved and wicked, where shall we find the good? Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.---This view of the passage strengthens my argument, but is not essential to its validity.

under



under these quotations your own opinion? That ‘there is upon the whole a very great preponderance of good in general, and with few, if any exceptions, in every individual in particular \*.’ And let me ask what reason will you give that your word, and that of a few other modern philosophers, is to be preferred to the solemn decision of prophets, apostles, and Jesus Christ himself?

I have said *modern* philosophers, because the antients clearly are against you. Dr. Doddridge, who will be admitted to have been well acquainted with their writings, and certainly a man of candour, says—‘Those who have carefully studied human nature, even amongst *pagans*, have acknowledged (and that in *very strong* terms) an inward depravation and corruption, adding a disproportionate force to evil examples, and rendering the mind averse to good †.’

On the general question of the depravity of human nature, Mr. Wilberforce has very

\* Review. p. 13.

† Doddridge’s Lectures, vol. ii. p. 198. Kippis’s edition. Also Historic Defence, vol. i. chap. 6.

properly appealed to facts, and ‘ facts are stubborn things.’ He has ably and eloquently argued from a variety of topics equally popular and convincing. I have no desire to repeat his arguments, and it seems the more unnecessary as you have replied to them only in a few instances, which I shall notice as we proceed.

I cannot omit this opportunity of observing the expedients to which you are frequently driven, in attempting to account for the language of Scripture on this subject. ‘ The Jews (you tell us) having been chosen by God to peculiar privileges, entertained a very high notion of their own dignity, and expressed themselves in the most contemptuous language of the idolatrous Gentiles, who were not in covenant with Jehovah. Of themselves they spoke as a “ *chosen* and a *holy nation, sons of God*, and “ *heirs of the promises*.’ But the heathens were represented as ‘ *sinners*, as *aliens*, as “ *enemies to God*,’ and the like. In allusion to which forms of expression, the converted Gentiles being entitled equally with converted Jews, to the blessings of the new dispensation, they are therefore

‘ said

‘ said to be *forgiven, reconciled, and saved,*  
 ‘ to be ‘ *fellow-citizens* with the saints, and  
 “ of the household of God \*.”

So then, Sir, the Gentiles only were sinners and enemies to God ; and these not in reality, but in the prejudiced opinion of the self-righteous Jews ; and these prejudices were carried so far as to be mingled with the christian doctrine of salvation ; and we are *forgiven, reconciled, and saved,* only by a Jewish conceit ! A happy way this of explaining Scripture phrases ; and, if I mistake not, some improvement on the method of Dr. Taylor !

But to be serious—as the subject certainly requires, though your glosses scarcely will permit—Do the sacred writers ascribe the terms sinners, enemies to God, &c. *only* to the Gentiles ? Did not Jesus Christ declare that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for unbelieving Jews ?—Did not Paul renounce all moral pre-eminence of the Jews above the Gentiles ? ‘ Are we better than they ?’ said he ; ‘ No, in no wise.’—Did not Peter charge upon the

\* Review, p. 17, 18.

Jews the enormous sin of crucifying the Lord of glory?—What then can you mean by insinuating, that the apostles in the use of these terms wrote under the influence of Jewish prejudices; and when they called the Gentiles *sinners*, &c. did not mean to include themselves?

I risk nothing in saying that the opposite to this is expressed, in terms as clear and unequivocal as any language can furnish. Paul, in particular, expressly says, that between Jew and Gentile, in the business of salvation, ‘there is no difference; for ALL ‘have *sinned*, and come short of the glory of ‘God \*.’ Also in writing to the Ephesians, so far from making an illiberal distinction between his countrymen and those Gentile converts, he expressly includes *himself*, who was an Hebrew of the Hebrews, and a Pharisee. ‘You (saith he) hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ‘wherein, in times past, ye walked, according ‘to the course of this world, according ‘to the prince of the power of the air, the ‘spirit that now worketh in the children of

\* Rom. iii. 22, 23.

• disobedience : among whom WE ALL had  
 • OUR conversation in times past, in the  
 • lusts of OUR flesh, fulfilling the desires of  
 • the flesh, and of the mind ; and were BY  
 • NATURE the CHILDREN OF WRATH  
 • EVEN AS OTHERS.’ Now, Sir, in what-  
 ever sense the terms *by nature* and *children*  
*of wrath* are here used, it is certainly clear,  
 that they apply equally to Jews and Gen-  
 tiles ; and, if it were possible to doubt this  
 in the words here cited, the subsequent con-  
 text would demonstrate it ; for there ‘ the  
 ‘ partition wall’ between Jews and Gentiles  
 is broken down, and both are ‘ raised to-  
 ‘ gether’ to the privileges of christianity.  
 But you, Sir, tell us this passage means no-  
 thing more than that the persons to whom  
 he wrote had been originally Gentiles, en-  
 flaved like others to the idolatries and vices  
 of their heathen state \*. That is, ‘ WE  
 [Paul and his converted *Jewish* brethren ;  
 —‘ we] Jews, were formerly idolatrous  
 ‘ Gentiles !’ If this be a specimen of *rational*  
*criticism*, and *we* must signify *you*, and *I*  
 a third person, whenever the cause of

\* Review, p. 44.



Unitarianism requires it, there is an end to all certainty of scripture interpretation. If indeed the penmen of the New Testament wrote thus vaguely, they deserve all the contempt you cast on them ; but if they wrote like men of common sense and honesty (waving the question of their inspiration), the opprobrium recoils on your system ; and your art of criticism is the art of shewing how little the scriptures may be made to mean.

Finally, Sir, permit me to appeal to your own observation and experience. I will not ask, whether you be wholly insensible of innate depravity ? This might appear impertinent : but did you ever meet with a wise and good man, who pretended to be so.—As far as my inquiries have extended, I have found men of the most liberal sentiments, the most amiable tempers, the most benevolent hearts, and the most useful lives—I have uniformly found these always ready to acknowledge and lament the fact. *Doddridge*, I have already cited. *Watts* (justly represented by Dr. Knox, as one of the most perfect of human characters) mingles it with all his songs. The benevolent



volent *Hanway* says, ‘ Those know but  
 ‘ little of the human heart who do not per-  
 ‘ ceive an evident inconsistency in it. No  
 ‘ one can be ignorant that there is a perpe-  
 ‘ tual struggle between his good and evil  
 ‘ propensities. This seems to mark out, in  
 ‘ the strongest characters, our being fallen  
 ‘ from something we originally were, agree-  
 ‘ able to what is related in the sacred writ-  
 ‘ ings of the fall of man.’—He adds (far-  
 ‘ ther on), ‘ Our hearts are treacherous, and  
 ‘ we cannot easily fathom the depth of our  
 ‘ own corruption \*.’

To name but one other, a man of such  
 excellency as to be universally esteemed an  
 ornament to human nature, *Howard* the  
 philanthropist; this man, when he found  
 the nation meant to honour him with a  
 premature monument, immediately and re-  
 solutely opposed it †.—‘ Alas ! (said he) our  
 ‘ best performances have such a mixture of  
 ‘ sin and folly that praise is vanity, and  
 ‘ presumption, and pain, to a thinking

\* *Hanway's Reflections on Life and Religion*, vol. ii.  
 p. 412, 458.

† *Stennet's Funeral Sermon for Howard*.

‘ mind.’

‘ mind.’—Such are the opinions of the *best* men on the state of human nature !

I should here certainly introduce the apostle Paul again, as confessing and bewailing his natural depravity and consequent infirmities, ‘ O wretched man that I ‘ am !’ &c. but I expect you would put him to critical torture, by making him speak in a false and assumed character ; and I have been already so much disgusted by this violence to common sense and truth, that I choose rather to let him rest in peace.

I hope I have said enough to prove, if any regard be due to scripture or experience, that mankind are universally depraved ; now permit me to ask, if you knew any one family which, from generation to generation, and in every variety of climate and of country, were subject to a particular disorder, would not this be sufficient to prove that disorder *natural* and constitutional ? Surely then, if all mankind, in every age, country, and situation, and from their earliest youth are contaminated more or less with sin, this is abundantly sufficient

ent

ent to prove the disorder is originally seated in human nature\*.

Under a proper impression of my own share in this depravity, and with a becoming sense of my infirmity, I desire to subscribe myself

Yours, &c.

\* Pref. *Edwards*, in his “ Christian Doctrine of Original Sin,” (Part I. chap. i. sect. 2.) has proved and illustrated this universal propensity to sin with great variety of argument. I should have quoted him at length, had not the case appeared too obvious to require it : but I take the liberty of saying in this place, that whatever on this subject may be found too slightly treated in my brief sketch, may be found argued at length in that work with a force of reason, that to me appears nothing short of demonstration.

## LETTER IV.

*Mr. Belsham's View of the present State of  
Human Nature.*

REV. SIR,

THE doctrine of human depravity is confessedly so much a fundamental principle, that I entered farther into the proof of it than perhaps was necessary, when my object is not to write a series of theological essays, or a body of divinity; but only to obviate some objections, and remove the stumbling blocks which you have thrown in the way of truth; however, my last letter was too long to admit an apology, and this may be better employed than in attempting one.

That there is a defect in the human character, and a degree of moral evil in the world, you seem willing to allow, by endeavouring to account for it, in consistency with your hypothesis. Men are not absolutely free from evil, you admit; but then they are good characters upon the whole, though not perfect ones. ‘Character (you observe) is  
‘ the

‘ the sum total of habits ; but in forming an  
 ‘ estimate of moral worth, it is an invariable  
 ‘ principle that *one* vice stamps a character  
 ‘ vicious, while a thousand virtues will not  
 ‘ atone for one immoral habit. If a man be  
 ‘ a liar, or dishonest, or intemperate, or im-  
 ‘ pious, his character is denominated vicious,  
 ‘ with whatever virtues it may otherwise be  
 ‘ adorned. He who keepeth the whole law,  
 ‘ and offendeth “ in one point, is guilty of  
 ‘ all.” And the reason is evident, virtue is  
 ‘ that system of habits which conduces to  
 ‘ the greatest ultimate happiness ; vice is  
 ‘ that which diminishes happiness, or pro-  
 ‘ duces misery. The union, therefore, of a  
 ‘ single vice with a constellation of virtues,  
 ‘ will contaminate them all ; will prevent  
 ‘ them from producing their proper effect,  
 ‘ and will, in proportion as it prevails, di-  
 ‘ minish the happiness, or produce the mi-  
 ‘ sery of the agent, who never can attain  
 ‘ the true end of his existence till this vice  
 ‘ is eradicated.

‘ Hence it follows, that there may be a  
 ‘ considerable preponderance of virtues, even  
 ‘ in characters justly estimated as vicious ;  
 ‘ and likewise, that the *quantity* of virtue  
 ‘ in



• in the world may far exceed that of vice,  
 • though the *number* of virtuous characters  
 • may be less than that of vicious ones \*.

A little farther on, you add, ‘ Few cha-  
 • racters are flagrantly wicked; and perhaps  
 • even in the *worst* of men, good habits  
 • and actions are more numerous than the  
 • contrary. Certainly they are so in the  
 • majority of mankind, and . . . . preponderant  
 • virtue is almost universal†.’

This you consider as ‘ the real state of  
 • things:’ how far it differs from the state-  
 ment of the sacred writers may be seen by  
 comparing it with my last letter; how far it  
 is consistent with itself, and with common  
 sense, is the point now to be examined.

1. If ‘ one vice stamp a character vicious,’  
 and that ‘ justly,’ it must be because it ren-  
 ders it so. There must be something in  
 the indulgence of this one vice that gives  
 an immoral tinge to the whole mass of dis-  
 position, or as you express it, ‘ which con-  
 taminates all.’ This is doubtless the truth:  
 for he that indulges one sin proves that it is  
 not from any regard to God, but merely

\* Review, p. 37, 38.

† Ibid, p. 39.



owing to the influence of some selfish motive that he is deterred from others. A disobedient son may not live in the practical violation of *all* his father's commands; but if he continually allow himself to violate one, that is a sufficient proof, it is not from regard to parental authority, but with a view to his credit or interest, that he complies with the others; and consequently, there is no principle of obedience in him. It is thus that 'he who offendeth in one point' of the law is said to be 'guilty of all\*.' One allowed transgression destroys the authority of the lawgiver, and with that the principle of obedience: for 'he that saith do not commit adultery, saith also, do not kill; now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.' So we may reason, If thou dost not indulge intemperate anger, yet if thou indulgest pride†; or if thou subduest pride, if

\* James ii. 10.

† I recollect but one instance of any person claiming an exemption from this master vice (pride) and that was Dr. Brown, the author of *Religio Medici*, and it has been universally considered as a proof of his excessive vanity.

thou

thou dost not subdue anger, thou art become a transgressor of the law, and a violator of the authority of the legislator.

In perfect consistency with this, the scriptures represent it as impossible for those that are ‘in the flesh,’ or under the dominion of vicious propensities, to please God\*, as it is for an evil tree to bring forth good fruit. Those that bring forth good fruit are good trees: so ‘he that doeth righteousness is righteous.’ Now if these things be true (and they appear to result necessarily from your own premises), what becomes of that ‘constellation of virtues,’ which you find even in vicious characters, and on which rests your whole argument for the preponderance of virtue in the world?

In what you say of vice, either in men or children, being ‘a deviation from the accustomed order of things,’ you make virtue to consist in the mere appearance of it, or in abstaining from gross immoralities, irrespective of the motive; whereas you cannot be ignorant, that it is from *this* moral actions are determined good or evil. Accord-

\* Rom. viii. 8.

ing to your reasoning a man may do righteousness, yea many acts of righteousness to one of wickedness, and yet not be righteous. Your good fruit confessedly springs from a bad tree, which evinces that, however beneficial it may prove in society, it is not good in his sight whose judgment is ever according to the truth.

Not only are you defective in your ideas of virtue, but vague and unscriptural in your ideas of vice. Were every man good and honest who escapes a prison, or avoids the penalty of the laws, there might, indeed, be some plausibility in your estimate of the preponderance of virtue. But if according to the doctrine of Jesus, every man that looks lustfully upon a woman committeth adultery, and every one unjustly, or inordinately angry is a murderer; if (as will follow from the same principle) every man who forms the wish to deceive his neighbour is a liar, and he who aims to defraud him is dishonest; where then shall we find your boasted preponderance of virtue, and your great majority of good and virtuous men? On the contrary, I fear we must borrow the lantern of Diogenes, or rather the candle of the Prophet

phet \*, to find here and there a good and pious character.

2. If character be the sum total of habits, or (which is the same thing) if the majority of habits, upon the sum total being estimated, denominate character, then where the habits of virtue preponderate above those of vice, the character may be denominated virtuous; and if good habits and actions are more numerous than the contrary, as you say ‘they certainly are in the majority of mankind,’ it follows that the majority of mankind are certainly virtuous characters; and not the majority only, but the *whole*; for you think ‘there may be a considerable preponderance of virtue, even in characters justly estimated as vicious, and perhaps in the worst of men:’ but how you reconcile these suppositions with each other, and especially with the assertions of Scripture, and in particular, with that of JESUS CHRIST, that many walk in the broad road of vice, and few in the narrow way that leads to life †, I confess myself utterly unable to conceive.

\* Zeph. i. 12.      † Matt. vii. 13.

3: Admitting that part of your premises, that ‘one vice stamps a character vicious,’ I should rather infer, that instead of a majority of *virtuous* habits and actions in the *worst* men, we should find a majority of *vicious* habits and actions, even in the *best* men. And thus the sacred writers uniformly represent the fact. ‘In many things we all offend—he that offendeth in one point is guilty of the whole,’ &c.

‘Who,’ saith DAVID, ‘can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.—Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up: they are more in number than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me.’ Under the deepest contrition he was so far from thinking of the preponderance of his virtues, that he uses language suiting only the lips of a polluted creature; “Create in me a clean heart O God, and “renew a right spirit within me\*.” The apostle PAUL is one of the most moral characters in the scriptures, yet he not only confesses himself a sinner, but the very chief†

\* Ps. xix. 12. xl. 12. li. 10. † 1 Tim. i. 15, 16.



of sinners, and a distinguished instance of forgiving grace.

It is true, that the scriptures speaks of saints as well as sinners ; and while they represent *all* men as guilty and depraved, speak of *some* as good men, righteous, holy ; but then, it is in consequence of a moral, or rather of a spiritual, change wrought in them :—they are *made* good, justified, and sanctified ; operations, Sir, to which you unhappily confess yourself a stranger, and must therefore seek another way to explain the paradox.

4. It may not be amiss to examine the character of these excellent virtues, and your very *courtly* definition of virtue from its *utility*.—I know that some persons judge every action to be right which they find useful, or convenient ; and thus make their own interest the criterion of right and wrong. But, I think, we have a far better test in the will of our Creator, regulated according to the eternal fitness of things ; though, at the same time, I admit that such is the original constitution of providence, that our duty is always in unison with our best interests, and conduces to our final happiness



pinefs. Nevertheless, it is dangerous and injudicious to establish this as the criterion of right and wrong, because, in many cases, it is far more difficult to determine what mode of conduct is conducive to our happiness, or to the general benefit of mankind, than to ascertain our duty, which is commonly plain and clear: this, therefore, would be explaining what is easy by what is difficult and obscure.

The definition of virtue as a ‘system of habits,’ is also remarkably inaccurate for a writer of your talents. There are virtuous principles, habits, and actions, but these should not be confounded with each other. In a *general* view, virtue may comprehend the whole; in a proper and *distinctive* sense it refers, I conceive, rather to the *principle* than to the habit, or the conduct.

You proceed—‘Children, we are told, [by Mr. Wilberforce] “are perverse and forward;” ‘that is, they now and then discover such ‘a temper \*.’ If you are a father, Sir, which I know not, and this is the extent of your observation, I may pronounce you a happy father, and your children happy-tempered

\* Review, p. 39.

children. But a writer of more experience, and (if I may speak it without offence) of superior wisdom, has informed us, that “ Foolishness is bound (up) in the heart of “ a child \*.” And truly, there is a perverseness in the tempers of most children, not easily to be accounted for on any other principle than that of human depravity. But as this is rather a subject of experience than of reasoning, I shall content myself with appealing to the hearts of parents.

‘ Honesty,’ you say, ‘ assumes the name ‘ of *common* honesty from its general prevalence:’ and this is the reason, I suppose, that it is so little valued; for, to say a man possesses *common* honesty, is tantamount to saying he is half a rogue. So *mere* morality is cheap enough, for, as that term is commonly understood, it implies the absence of all true religion.

As to the doctrine, that ‘ all actions and ‘ habits, previous to conversion, are sinful;’ it proceeds on principles so just and obvious, that I think you very happy in the expedient you have adopted to get rid of it, by the assuring us that the refutation of ‘ such an

\* Prov. xxii. 15.

‘ absurdity

‘ absurdity would be an abuse of argument.’ Here, indeed, you are right enough, for it is only by the ‘ abuse of argument’ that it could be refuted. The whole absurdity, however, lies in believing that man, with a heart at enmity with God, can do nothing in that state with a view to please him, and consequently, nothing that is well pleasing to him :—or in the emphatic language of Jesus Christ, that ‘ an evil tree cannot ‘ bring forth good fruit.’ A doctrine that you will not find it so easy to prove an absurdity as to call it one.

That the narratives of the creation and fall are literally true, I have no doubt ; but it is not necessary to my present design to investigate them, and the attempt would greatly extend my plan. That we some way or other become partakers of the guilt of our first parents, and subject to its consequences, is, what I should have supposed no christian minister would deny ; but it is become fashionable to advance bold and daring paradoxes ; and nothing has a greater effect with many readers. I will leave it, however, to your judgment to determine, whether it be most reasonable to believe that

we

we partake of pain and sickness, and death, which are the wages of sin, from Adam, on account of our being related to him, and some way implicated in his crime ; or whether we partake the penalty without any participation of the fault.—Leaving this to your consideration and enquiries, I again subscribe myself

Yours, &c.

## LETTER V.

*The Origin of Human Depravity.*

REV. SIR,

YOU have raised two grand objections to the doctrine of Human Depravity, as stated by Calvinists:

1, That if moral evil be natural and necessary it must be the work of God, in such a manner as to make him answerable for it.

2. That if a *majority* of evil prevail, it imputes malevolence to the Creator.—Both these inferences appear to me blasphemous; either then the premises, or the conclusion, must, in my view, be erroneous.

The formal discussion of these propositions would naturally involve the grand question of the origin of evil; an enquiry upon which I dare not enter. It was indeed too great for Milton, and for Milton's angels, at least when fallen; who

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“ Reason'd high  
 “ Of Providence, foreknowledge, will and fate;  
 “ Fix'd fate, free-will, foreknowledge absolute;  
 “ And found no end, in wand'ring mazes lost \*.”

\* Paradise Lost, book ii. line 553.



All I shall attempt in *this* letter, is merely to offer a few observations on your first objection, and the reasonings by which you support it:

First, In the axiom which you have assumed from the words of a supposed objector, that ‘ whatever we are *by nature*, we ‘ are what our Creator made us \*,’ you have availed yourself of the *ambiguity* of a term to misrepresent the sentiments of your opponents. The term *nature*, as applied to man, properly signifies that which belongs to his frame or constitution *as man*: but, it is also used for a mere accidental property, in cases where that property comes into the world, and grows up with us, in opposition to properties contracted by imitation or custom. Thus, some persons seem at least, by your own acknowledgement †, ‘ to inherit the vices, as well as the diseases of their ‘ parents;’ and where this is the case, it is common to say, they are *ill-natured*, or that evil is ingrained (as it were) in their very nature. You well know, Sir, that it is not in the first sense, but in the last, that we

\* Rev. p. 31.      † Ib. p. 41.



consider men as depraved *by nature*. We do not believe that sin is an essential property of human nature ; but merely an accidental one : not produced by the Creator, but contracted by the creature \*.

You are certainly aware that Calvinists do not consider the state in which men are now born into the world, as being the same with that in which they were originally created. They believe, from what they consider as the highest authority, that “ God made man “ upright, after his own image—in the “ likeness of God made he him ;” but that by means of the sin of our first parent, the whole species is become polluted. This connexion they allow to have been established by a divine constitution : even by that fundamental law of nature, that *like produces like*. By this law the branch resembles the stem, the stream the fountain, and a

\* I have sometimes thought, that much of the difficulty on this subject arises from speaking of sin as a positive being ; whereas, it is only a negative affection of being, and is accordingly generally expressed in the New Testament by terms of a negative import, as (*Ανομία*) illegality, or transgression :—(*Αμαρτία*) missing our aim, &c.

degenerate, mortal, sinful parent produces a degenerated, mortal, sinful offspring. ‘ Who,’ saith Job, ‘ can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?—What is man (saith Eliphaz) that he should be clean? or he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous \*?’

In this dispensation of providence, we do not, however, consider the Deity as answerable for the defects, infirmities, or faults of his creatures. You, Sir, may object to this view of things, and may charge it with absurdity, and us with the want of understanding; but you have no right to impute your conclusions to us, as axioms, or allowed principles.

\* Job xiv. 4. xv. 14. I have quoted these only as aphorisms of the ancients; but I see your endeavour (p. 48) to set aside the testimony of Eliphaz, by observing, that Jehovah censured him as having ‘ not spoken the thing that was right.’ You can hardly, however, suppose this the point in question, because here we see Job and his friend were perfectly agreed. Besides, the point alluded to was evidently the providence of God, and not the condition of mankind. ‘ You have not spoken of ME,’ saith the Lord, ‘ the thing that is right.’ If Job’s friends believed this doctrine, however, it is, at least, a proof of its antiquity.

Secondly,

Secondly, The arguments which you have advanced against our principles are equally directed against your own. You say, ‘ It is futile to alledge, as a palliation of the ‘ difficulty, that the first parents of the hu- ‘ man race were originally innocent and ‘ happy ; but that, in consequence of their ‘ fall, they contracted a depraved nature, ‘ which they transmitted to their posterity, ‘ for which God is not accountable. Such ‘ reasoning as this cannot impose upon the ‘ understanding even of a child. Did God ‘ resign the direction of his works as soon as ‘ he had placed Adam in paradise? Is not ‘ his agency as really, and as immediately ‘ concerned in the formation of every indi- ‘ vidual, as in that of their original ances- ‘ tors? If I am born into the world a de- ‘ praved creature, it is by his appointment, ‘ and even by his immediate energy, ‘ I am “ what my Creator made me \*.”

That divine providence extends to the persons and posterity of Adam, and that divine energy is continually exerted in carrying into effect the established laws of nature, is

\* Review, p. 32, 33.

readily allowed : but does it follow from hence, that God is ‘ accountable’ for the creatures’ sin? If so, it will follow equally from your own principles as from ours. Whether men become sinners in consequence of the fall or not, sinners they are, without exception : and if we suppose with you, that they are ‘ the creatures of circumstances, ‘ and that the habits they form are the result ‘ of the impressions to which they are exposed \*;’ still the divine providence having placed them in those circumstances, God would be equally answerable for the creatures’ sin, whether it arise from their original, or subsequent situation. Indeed you seem to have no objection to this consequence, when you say, ‘ The only enquiry of importance upon this subject, is into the *quantity* and proportion of the evil which actually exists. How it was first introduced is a question comparatively of little moment. The difficulty is *the same upon all hypotheses*. All must ultimately be referred to God †.’

Thirdly, The most important difference

\* Review, p. 41.

† Ibid.

between

between us, relative to these subjects, respects the Creator being considered as ‘accountable for the sins of the creature.’ Whatever certain necessarian Philosophers\* may have advanced, it is well known that Calvinists agree in rejecting this idea as blasphemous. We ascribe the government of human volitions, as well as actions, to the Supreme Being: but do not consider any influence to which we are exposed, as destroying our free agency, and accountableness. Judas in betraying Christ, and the Jews in putting him to death, did no more than God’s ‘hand and counsel determined before to be done:’ yet, nevertheless, ‘by wicked hands he was crucified and slain †.’ The Son of man went, as was determined; yet a heavy woe was denounced on him by whom he was betrayed.

But, Sir, your manner of reasoning appears to ascribe the sins of men to the Creator in such a sense as to render *him* ‘accountable,’ rather than the creature. If divine providence extends over all events, you infer that it is absurd to represent Adam as contracting

\* See Priestley’s Doctrine of Philosophical Necessity. Sect. x.

† Acts ii. 23. iv. 28.



any sin, or transmitting it to his posterity, ‘ for which God is not accountable.’ So decidedly are you in favour of the sinner, that, on the supposition of his inheriting a corrupt nature from Adam, (which, after all, you elsewhere treat as a matter of little moment) you scruple not openly to espouse his cause. You side with the bold objector introduced by Mr. Wilberforce, justify him throughout, and as if his expressions were not strong enough, you encrease their energy. Why, Sir, did you not also espouse the cause of Paul’s objector, and say with him, ‘ Why doth he yet find fault; who hath resisteth his will?’ You must surely perceive the great resemblance between his language and the axiom to which you are so partial—“ I am what my Creator made me.”

Why did you not become the advocate of Judas, and of the murderers of Jesus Christ? They were, as you suppose, ‘ the creatures of circumstances,’ and their characters formed by the influences to which they were exposed, all which must ‘ ultimately be referred to God.’ You could, doubtless, put a plea into their lips equally plausible with that of Mr. W’s. objector. Judas, in particular,

particular, might have been furnished with a shield from your armory to repel the threatenings of his master. The traitor, while sitting at table with him, was told, it had been *good for him not to have been born*: but instructed by your divinity, he might have replied, ‘ It is plainly repugnant to the justice of God, that the gift of existence to any of his intelligent creatures should be upon the whole a curse \*.’

Here, Sir, at present I leave you advocating the cause of the ungodly; an employment which will assuredly be of short duration, as the day draweth nigh in which every mouth will be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God!

I am yours, &c.

\* Review, p. 14.

## LETTER VI

*The Quantum of Moral Evil.*

REV. SIR,

I NOW proceed to examine your second objection, *If there be a preponderance of evil in the world, malignity is imputable to the Creator* \*: or, as you elsewhere expresses it, ‘ If vice and misery’ preponderate ‘ in the world, we must conclude that the Maker of the world, whose character we learn only from his works, is a weak, or a malignant Being †.’

Whether *misery* preponderate in the world is no part of our controversy; and whether weakness be ascribed to God by our system, or by that which represents him as introducing and permitting evil ‘ because it is unavoidable ‡,’ let the Reader judge. I confine my enquiry to the charge of *malignity* which you, Sir, on the supposition of the preponderance of evil in this

\* Review, p. 32.    † Ibid. p. 13.    ‡ Ibid. p. 12.  
world,

world, have had the temerity to exhibit against the Deity. And here I observe,

1. If the *quantum* of moral evil be supposed to affect the divine character, so must its *existence*, in a proportionate degree. Now as we both admit this, both our systems must be affected by it, though unequally. If my system be affected by the existence of evil, it must be on account of that existence being chargeable on the Deity: but if this be chargeable on Deity, then is your system also proportionably affected by it. That is, if my system represent the divine Being as malignant, (I speak with reverence) so must yours, though in an inferior degree. The vine that produces noxious grapes is bad, whether they be few or many; because it is not from the quantity, but the quality of the fruit, that the tree is characterised.

Here your maxim should be recollected, 'that one vice stamps a character vicious, while a thousand virtues will not atone for one immoral habit.' Will not this apply to the Supreme Being equally as to his creatures? If he be the author of evil in *any* degree so as to affect his moral character, that character is ruined; he must be an evil

or malignant Being : but if the existence of evil do not affect his character, neither can its proportionate quantity : for this plain reason, that if God be not answerable for the existence of evil *at all*, he cannot be answerable for the existing *quantum*.

Your reasoning, as I have already remarked, proceeds upon the supposition that God is so concerned in the existence of moral evil, that himself, rather than the sinner, is *accountable* for it. In short, you seem to consider it as a kind of medical potion, a degree of which may be salutary, and so might be given from benevolence ; but a larger degree poisonous and fatal, and so indicative of a malignant design in administering it. But is there nothing fallacious in this way of stating the question ? Can any degree of moral evil, in itself, be really *good* ? Alas ! Sir, instead of resembling the useful poisons of the *Materia Medica*, sin is rather like the poison of the asp, or of a rabid animal, the smallest proportion of which is dangerous, if not fatal.—Did the Creator really prescribe this deadly potion ? Ah no ! it is ‘ the abominable thing which his soul ‘ hateth.’—Is man as innocent and blameless



less in drinking this forbidden draught as in following the friendly recipe of the physician? This you certainly cannot suppose, or why feel indignant toward the wretch that defames or injures you, and not rather apologize for him as impelled by philosophical necessity? But if you cannot set down to the account of his Maker the evil treatment of a fellow-creature, you have no reason to believe that the Creator himself will thus excuse sin, or consider the sinner as the passive instrument of his own will.

2. Allowing the existence of a preponderance of evil to reflect dishonour on the divine character, it must be on the supposition of that preponderance being *universal* and *perpetual*, neither of which can be admitted. If *this* world lieth in wickedness, it does not follow that the case is the same with the whole creation. Indeed, there is the clearest evidence to the contrary. For, to say nothing here of those parts of the creation of which revelation is silent, we are informed of a very numerous order (or rather orders) of intelligent beings, who have kept their first estate uncontaminated by moral evil; and who inhabit a world where

‘ nothing that defileth shall in anywise enter in.’ Neither is the preponderance of evil in the present world any proof that it always will prevail here. We are taught in various passages of the sacred writings, to expect a long, a happy period, a millenium, a golden age, when the ballance will be turned, and the earth be filled with peace and righteousness. And when the great increase of mankind during that period, undiminished by intemperance, war, oppression, or artificial scarcity, is duly considered; together with the number of dying infants (equal to half the species) of whose salvation I have elsewhere given the reasons of my confidence \*, we have a grand majority of the human race among the saved—‘ An innumerable multitude which no man can number.’

Part of this reasoning you appear to have anticipated, and reply, that it is ‘ preposterous’ to argue, ‘ That although evil prevails in this district of the universe, good may greatly preponderate upon the whole. This is nothing more than an ap-

\* Infant salvation. An Essay.

' peal from fact to gratuitous supposition.  
 ' We can only reason from what we know.  
 ' If evil prevails as far as our observation  
 ' extends, we can have no reason to believe  
 ' that it does not prevail in the same pro-  
 ' portion through the universe. Revelation  
 ' itself could not prove the contrary ; for if  
 ' God be a malignant Being, How can we  
 ' know that he does not take pleasure in de-  
 ' ceiving his creatures ? What ground have  
 ' we for depending upon his veracity \* ?.'

Am I reading Mr. Belsham, or Thomas  
 Paine ? Since I had the honour of reviewing  
*The Age of Reason*, I do not recollect to  
 have met with a passage so replete with in-  
 fidelity and sophistry.

' *We can only reason, (you say) from what*  
 ' *we know, and that from our own obser-*  
 ' *vation.*' The scriptures then contain no  
*data* on which we can place any reliance.  
 But, if so, the ancient Hebrews, who ' re-  
 ' ceived the promises, were persuaded of  
 ' them, and embraced them,' must, on your  
 principles, have had no reason for their  
 confidence. And how is it that you believe

\* Review, p. 33, 34.

in a future resurrection? I presume that nothing of this kind has come within the sphere of your observation. Reason, indeed, arguing from the moral perfections of Deity, compared with the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in the present life, renders it probable; but revelation alone affirms it. Revelation, however, according to your principle of reasoning, cannot prove this, because, without a future state we cannot vindicate the divine justice; and if God be unjust (I speak with reverence), how can we be assured of his veracity?

Now, supposing the prevalence of evil in this world, and assuming its prevalence universally, you are confident the Deity must be a malignant being. Must, then, the Deity be arraigned at the bar of his own creatures as a malignant Being, because they cannot account for some circumstances in his providence? Must human wisdom be made the standard of divine perfection? Presumptuous worm! is this thy reverence to thy Creator, to pronounce his character malignant, because thou and the crawling tenants of thy mole-hill are depraved?—For my  
part,

part, Sir, if I knew nothing of a better world, I should think it criminal temerity to accuse my Maker : but as I know

‘ There is another and a better world,’

Temerity would be too weak a term to describe my folly. As well may the Arabian infer that all the earth is desert, or the inhabitant of the Poles, that the whole globe is covered with ice and perpetual snows, as we conclude, in the narrow view we have from this little corner of the creation, that all other worlds must resemble ours. In fact, every argument from analogy or observation leads to a conclusion directly opposite. No two spots of this terraqueous globe—no two plants, or animals, are perfectly alike. If we raise our eyes to the celestial worlds, we discern the same variety. All the planets of our system vary in their size, distance from the central luminary, and in their periodical revolutions. Their external forms and circumstances are no less dissimilar : some differ in their brilliancy and colour ; others in their attendant satellites : Jupiter has his belts, and Saturn has his ring. Thus  
‘ one star differs from another star in glory.’

What



What reason have we then to assert that, where every other circumstance differs, the moral character of all worlds must uniformly be the same?

If we receive the authority of revelation the case is still more clear. The sacred writers inform us of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, of pure and happy spirits who attend on the divine presence, and worship before the throne: and, comparing the lights of scripture and philosophy, it appears probable to me, that the proportion of evil, natural and moral, is to that of good, not greater than this little globe we dwell in, compared with the innumerable worlds that compose the universe. This, I say, appears probable to me: but, however this may be, it is sufficiently evident that no just inference can be drawn from the prevalence of evil in this world to its prevalence throughout all the works of God.

There is one point, Sir, which, amidst all this weakness and profaneness, you have rendered clear; namely, your wish to admit of nothing from the evidence of divine revelation, but what you know without it.

This

This is the plain import of your reasoning ; and wherein this is preferable to the sentiment of Bolingbroke, Hume, or Paine, I am at a loss to conceive. Only carry this principle into effect and you will give up the resurrection of the dead, and every other doctrine peculiar to Revelation. And thus, Sir, you may congratulate yourself on having accomplished what one of your fellow-labourers seems to have had in contemplation—‘ a retreat to the fortresses of Deism ; ‘ a junction with the illustrious philosophers ‘ of classic times \*.’ Leaving you in such company, you cannot regret that I here subscribe myself

Yours, &c.

\* Wakefield’s Examination of the Age of Reason,  
p. 4.

## LETTER VII.

*Of SATAN and a FUTURE PUNISHMENT.*

REV. SIR,

**B**EFORE I quit this gloomy part of my subject, I think myself bound to take some notice of your ‘ doctrine of a devil and ‘ his agency,’ and of your remarks on future punishment, so far as connected with our subject. Your representation of this arch-enemy of goodness as ‘ a being of pure malevolence, who is, to every practical purpose, omniscient and omnipresent \*,’ is, perhaps, as far from truth as that of the painters and the poets, who dress him with hoofs and horns, and a forked tail ; nor do I find either pleaded for by Mr. Wilberforce, whose notions, if I do not misconceive him, differ not materially from mine.

If you are a materialist, as I suppose, you may smile at me when I talk of a spiritual world and immaterial beings ; however, ri-

\* Review, p. 46.

dicule is not a test of truth with me, and though I have no disposition to enter into the controversy respecting spiritual existence, I will frankly give my views of this subject, and then consider your objections.

The scriptures, as I understand them, assert the existence of a spiritual, as well as of a material world:—that there are innumerable *angels*, so called, as *agents*, made use of by divine providence in the government of the universe:—that a considerable number of these are fallen, as well as men, from their original state of happiness and purity: that they are full of misery and malice, and wish to involve mankind in the same situation as themselves. The original chief of these spirits I suppose to be *Satan*, so denominated as the great *adversary* of mankind; and, as the name is rather characteristic than proper, it may also apply to any of his emissaries employed in doing mischief; and this has occasioned some confusion among the vulgar, who may have attached to the character of Satan a sort of omniscience and omnipresence, such as you describe.

In vindication of these notions you require it to be proved, ‘ first, that the sacred writers

‘ *believed* and *taught*’ them ; and ‘ secondly,  
 ‘ that this doctrine was *communicated* to them  
 ‘ by *revelation*, and that they were *autho-*  
 ‘ *rized to make it known*\*.’

One of these articles I have no difficulty in undertaking to prove, namely, that the sacred writers *taught* this doctrine ; but how they came by it, whether they *believed* it themselves, or were authorized to teach it, are, in my opinion, very impertinent enquiries. When the great God sends messengers endued with miraculous powers for their credentials, surely it is sufficient to demand our credit, without, in every instance, questioning them whence they received their notions, or whether they were commissioned to promulgate them. If the apostles taught doctrines they did not believe, then were they hypocrites ; if they preached the commandments or traditions of men for the oracles of God they were deceivers ; if they betrayed secrets which ought not to have been divulged, they were weak and foolish men, not fit to have been trusted : in all these cases it is of little consequence *what* they taught. But

\* Review, p. 46.



if they were faithful and honest men, which you seem willing to admit, much more if they were inspired, as we assert—we may safely believe all they taught, without any of those improper questions with which you perplex the subject. The simple question with me is, Did the sacred writers teach the existence of a devil?

Though I consider not myself as called upon in these letters to produce formally, and at length, the scriptures alledged to prove the affirmative of this question, some of which have been cited by Mr. Wilberforce; I shall, however, adduce those which appear to me most decisive, and are supported by a great number of corroborating passages.

PAUL exhorts the Ephesians \* to ‘put on ‘the whole armour of God,’ that they might be thereby ‘able to stand against the wiles ‘of the devil. For (says he) we wrestle not ‘against flesh and blood’—*i. e.* against human enemies, such as ourselves; ‘but against ‘principalities, against powers, against the ‘rulers [or princes] of the darkness of this ‘world, against spiritual wickedness in high

\* Eph. vi. 11---16.

‘places,’

‘ places,’—or rather ‘ against wicked spirits  
 ‘ on high : \*’—that is, ‘ the prince of the  
 ‘ power of the air’, (as he is elsewhere called †,) and his angels. And again, he recommends, especially ‘ the shield of faith,’ as  
 ‘ able to quench all the fiery darts of the  
 ‘ wicked [one],’ i. e. the temptations of the devil ‡.

So PETER derives an argument for christian vigilance from the malevolent activity of this arch-enemy of mankind. ‘ Be sober,  
 ‘ be vigilant ; because your adversary, the  
 ‘ devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about,  
 ‘ seeking whom he may devour : whom resist, steadfast in the faith,’ &c. The same apostle, speaking also of the fallen angels in general, says,—‘ God spared not the angels  
 ‘ that sinned, but cast them down to hell,  
 ‘ and delivered them into chains of darkness,  
 ‘ to be reserved unto judgment §. JUDE expresses the same idea, in nearly the same words, a little amplified—‘ The angels which

\* So the Syriac---Theophylact, Œcumenius, &c. among the fathers---Grotius, Beza, Le Clerc, Doddridge, and many others, among the moderns.

† Eph. ii. 2. ‡ 2 Tim. ii. 26.

§ 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. 2 Pet. ii. 4.

‘ which

‘ which kept not their first estate [or principality], but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day \*.’

JOHN refers, perhaps, more frequently to this hypothesis than any other of the apostles, especially in the book of his Revelation †. But I have quoted passages sufficient to prove that this is the uniform doctrine of the New Testament writers. Should you still insist upon knowing whence they had these notions, I will endeavour to satisfy you even in this. They had them from their divine Master, who taught them to refer to diabolical agency most of the evils in the world, either natural or moral, particularly vice and madness. They heard from him (we may believe) the story of his temptation in the wilderness: they heard him speak of their grand adversary, as the *Prince of this world*, and the great instigator of human mischiefs, who inspired the scribes and Pharisees with malice, Judas with covetousness, and even Peter with improper sentiments of

\* Jude 6.

† 1 John ii. 14. iii. 12. Rev. ii. 13. iii. 9, xx. 2, &c.  
false

false tenderness for his Master \*.—It will be proper now, Sir, to listen to your objections.

1. You say, ‘ the existence of an evil spirit is no where expressly taught as a doctrine of Revelation.’ I admire the caution displayed in this sentence. You do not simply say, it is ‘ not taught ;’ but not ‘ *expressly* taught :’ and if even here you should be refuted, you have another reserve—‘ it is not ‘ taught as a doctrine of revelation ;’ but only (I suppose) as a private dogma of the writer. Both these insinuations have been I think already sufficiently refuted and exposed.

2. You assure us—‘ It was unknown to ‘ the Jews previous to the captivity ; but ‘ was probably borrowed by their learned ‘ men, at that time from the oriental philosophy, of which it is well known to have ‘ constituted an essential part.’ This is said on the supposition that the Book of Job was not written till this period—a supposition that appears to me not only gratuitous, but evidently erroneous ; for proof of which I must refer however to Bp. LOWTH’S Lec-

\* John viii. 44. xiii. 2. Matt. xvi. 23.

tures, and Mr. PETERS's Critical Dissertation upon Job. But it is not in Job only that the name and character of *Satan* may be found. It occurs in other parts of the Old Testament. The word in the original properly signifies an *adversary*, and in many places it is thus translated \*. It is supposed to be used, however, as a proper name, both by David, and the author of the first book of Chronicles, as well as by the prophet Zechariah †. Bishop WATSON is of opinion, that it was originally the proper name of the depraved archangel, and was from thence made the root of a verb, implying enmity: however, as this verb is certainly *Hebrew*, there seems no reason for ascribing the name or character to a Chaldaic original, as you have done, after the example of *Voltaire* and *Thomas Paine*.

3. You deny, that by the *Prince of this World*, our Lord intended Satan, and suppose his meaning to be, that he 'was about to be unjustly arrested by the Roman magistrate.' Let us examine:—The expression

\* See Num. xxii, 22, 32.—1 Sam. xxix, 4.—2 Sam. xix, 22.—1 Kings v. 4.—xi, 14, 23, 25.

† Psalm cix. 6.—1 Chron. xxi. 1.—Zech. iii. 1, 2.



is used three times by our Lord, according to his beloved disciple \*, and may naturally be supposed to have the like import in them all. In the first instance, a heavenly voice had been heard in approbation of the Son of God. But, said he, this voice was ‘ not for my sake, but for yours ’—to fortify you in the approaching trial of your faith during my crucifixion and death. ‘ Now ’ in this event ‘ is the judgment of this world : ’ now shall ‘ the *Prince of this World* be cast out ’ of his dominion. ‘ And I, when I be lifted up from the earth, ’ upon the cross, ‘ will draw all men unto me. ’ The second passage is cited by you and Mr. Wilberforce, and was uttered in similar circumstances. Jesus had been speaking of his end, and preparing the minds of his disciples for the event. ‘ I have told you before it cometh to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter, ’ as my sufferings draw nearer, ‘ I will not talk much with you : for the Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing—or as some copies read, ‘ can find nothing in me. ’—’ But that the world may know that I love the Father ; and as the Father gave me com-

\* John xii, 31. xiv. 30. xvi. 11.

‘mandment, so I do—arise, let us go hence :’ that is, let us go forth to meet the danger, and prove the readiness with which I obey my Father, even unto his last painful command of ‘laying down my life.’

The third passage relates to the promise of the Comforter, who was, in consequence of the death of Christ, to ‘convince,’ or rather ‘convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment :’—of the latter, ‘because ‘the Prince of this world is judged.’

By a comparison of these texts with each other, and with their respective contexts, which I take to be the proper method of criticism, it appears to me that they are all, to a certain degree, synonymous, referring to the same event, and to the same person ; of which, if there can be any question, the following circumstance will be sufficient to decide. In several passages \*, the crucifixion of Christ is spoken of as an act of triumph over Satan and his hosts, and the overthrow of his empire : By this ‘the Prince of ‘this world was judged,’ condemned, and his cause destroyed ; and it was this that prepar-

\* See Col. ii. 15. Heb. ii. 14, &c,

ed the way for the gifts of the Spirit, and the consequent successes of the gospel. As to the title, it should be observed, that Satan is elsewhere called the god of this world, the prince of the power of the air\*, &c.

The above texts in Peter and Jude, however, you apprehend cannot be brought in favour of diabolical agency, because they represent the fallen angels, not as ranging at liberty, but as bound in chains. These chains, Sir, you must be aware are metaphorical, and imply restraint and confinement only to a certain degree. It is our mercy and our comfort, that the great enemy of our souls is *chained*; yet to the extent of his chain—so far as Providence permits—he ranges to and fro’ the world ‘seeking whom he *may* (or *can*) devour †’.

Lastly, our scheme is unphilosophical. ‘Philosophers discover no *phænomena* which countenance the hypothesis of an invisible malignant energy;’—neither ‘do the scriptures, carefully studied, and *rightly understood*, authorize any such unphilosophical and mischievous opinion.’ The former part of

\* 2 Cor. iv, 14.—Ep. ii, 2. &c.

† Job i. 7.—1 Pet. v, 8.

the sentence may be true enough, if by philosophy we understand the modern scepticism; and the latter may be admitted with the change of a word or two: e. g. instead of ‘rightly understood’, read ‘as understood by us, the rational Christians and philosophers of *the age of reason*!’

I should not have thought it necessary to connect with this discussion, the doctrine of *eternal punishment*, if you had not drawn it into the sphere of observation by the following gross misrepresentation. ‘The only question (you say) is about a plain simple fact — Can infinite justice and goodness doom a being to *eternal* misery, for *no other cause*, but that of not extricating himself out of the state in which his Creator placed him, without any power to act or will \*?’ — Not to insist upon the impropriety of confounding hypothesis with fact, I am compelled to say this statement is compounded of the grossest misrepresentations possible. It is not fact, nor is it asserted by Mr. Wilberforce, or any other Calvinistical writer with whom I am acquainted, that man, even in his present state is ‘without any power to act or will;’

\* Review, p. 53.

much

much less was he so in 'the state in which  
 'his Creator placed him.'—It is not true,  
 that man 'is doomed to eternal misery' for  
 'not *extricating himself* out of the state in  
 'which his Creator placed him,' or even the  
 state into which he is now fallen; much less  
 is it true that he is so doomed 'for *no other*  
 'cause'.

The only cause of suffering is sin: and  
 unbelief is only the source of our misery so  
 far as it is criminal. It is true, the scriptures  
 represent unbelief as the great cause of con-  
 demnation; because it rejects the remedy  
 which God has provided in the gospel. Our  
 Lord has taught us to consider the Brazen  
 Serpent as typical of himself and his salva-  
 tion. Suppose an Israelite stung with one  
 of the fiery serpents, and dying with the tor-  
 ture, directed to its brazen Type:—Suppose  
 this man to be possessed of a philosophical  
 genius; and not being able to discover  
 any 'phenomena which countenance the  
 'hypothesis,' that the sight of a brazen  
 serpent could heal the bite of a real one, he  
 turns away from it with as much scorn as you  
 reject the atonement of the Saviour; he trusts  
 to nature, or to medicine for a cure, and pe-  
 rishes



riches like a philosopher. Now, Sir, it was the sting of the serpent which was the primary cause of this man's death, yet may it also be fairly attributed to his rejection of the remedy provided by authority, because all who looked live. Thus our own transgressions are the primary cause of our condemnation; yet when a remedy is provided in the gospel, the rejection of it may be properly considered as the more immediate cause:—  
 'Except ye believe—ye shall die in your sins.'

Still you will object, that we represent man under an absolute inability to believe, which therefore excuses his unbelief. Let me, however, beg you to consider the nature of this inability, that it is not natural, but moral. Either the man is a philosopher and can find no phænomena in nature to countenance the gospel method of salvation, and therefore *cannot* believe it; or he loves his vices and *cannot* persuade himself to renounce them for the humbling virtues of the gospel. In short, he is a proud man who *cannot* stoop—a revengeful man who *cannot* forgive—a lascivious man who *cannot* mortify—or an idle man who *cannot* work;—such are  
 the

the pleas, and such is the inability of sinners. Judge you, whether this excuses, or aggravates, their crime.

As to the doctrine of *eternal* punishment, I am aware of its unpopularity among philosophers ; yet I believe the principal objections to it, arise from misconception, or from mistaken sentiments of compassion. Our feelings are not the test of truth ; yet I abhor the idea of arbitrary punishment as much as you can. God originally fixed an indissoluble connection between sin and pain ; and at the same time endued man, as I conceive, with an immortal soul. None of the perfections of the Deity could bind him to disjoin the connection between sin and its natural consequences ; or to revoke the immortality of the sinner. Death, it is true, by intervening, produces a temporary suspension of animal sensation ; but even you cannot consider it as annihilation, without giving up the resurrection.

You allow, that ‘ in the nature of things, misery is necessarily connected with vice.\*’ Let us suppose, that God had been pleased to have punished the sinner in the present

\* Review, p. 14.

world, only by suffering the natural consequences of vice to take place without mortality:—What then would have been the issue?—Debauchery would have induced immortal disease—and one sin, in many instances, have plunged the transgressor into perpetual misery. His character ruined, must have exposed him to everlasting shame and remorse; and earth would have been an hell of eternal punishment. Now, as sin is in its nature hardening and progressive, the question is, supposing men to persist for ever in this course of sin, whether the justice of God require him, either to dissolve the original union between sin and sorrow, or to terminate their existence and their pain together?—I think hardly any man capable of foreseeing consequences, would maintain the affirmative. Yet, if *justice* require not this, no other attribute can—for mercy must be free.

Farther, it is not for us to pronounce upon the degree of demerit which attaches to moral evil. The sacred writers have declared sin to be ‘exceeding sinful;’ and that it is ‘an evil and bitter thing to depart from the living God.’ And were we in other re-

L.

spects

spects equal to the task, we are too much implicated in the question to decide impartially. Light thoughts of sin, and apologies for vice, may indeed harmonize with the other parts of your scheme; and truly, if moral evil had so little criminality attached to it, as Unitarian writers seem unanimous in supposing, we might well dispense with the doctrines of the atonement, and the divinity of the Saviour.

I do not think it necessary to cite here the various scriptures which denounce endless, or everlasting punishment against sinners finally impenitent. You know, Sir, the Judge himself hath said—‘ That these shall go into  
‘ everlasting punishment—where the worm  
‘ dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.’ I know that you possess a critical talent whereby you can explain *everlasting* to mean temporary; and *endless*, but of short duration. By the same art you can explain away every important fact or doctrine of the Bible; but, Sir, if any human laws had attached to certain crimes a certain fearful punishment; and if the terms to express that punishment were as naturally expressive of death, as those employed in the scriptures on this subject are  
of

of endless misery \*, we should think *that* criminal might be much better employed, who, instead of cherishing repentance, and suing for a pardon, should persuade himself and his fellow-prisoners, that the sentence would not be literally inflicted—that it bore some milder import, and intended merely a temporary chastisement.

You, Sir, appear to consider the providence of God, in placing his creatures in circumstances so perilous to their virtue as ours are in the present life, as rendering him accountable, and excusing them; and accordingly plead the injustice of punishment so

\* The natural and obvious import of the terms rendered eternal and everlasting, (*αιωνιον*, &c.) has been very fully examined by the present Dr. Jonathan Edwards, in his Answer to Dr. Chancey, to which I therefore refer.

As these terms are applied to the misery of the impenitent, they are greatly strengthened by such considerations as these, viz. 1. They are the same that are applied to the eternal happiness of the blessed. 2. They are explained by other terms which admit of no equivocation, as “their worm dieth not—they never shall be forgiven—shall not see life,” &c. which give these words in this connection a peculiar emphasis.

severe



severe as that of endless misery\*. But if God were accountable for the sins of men upon this principle, it must not be for part only, but for the whole; since you acknowledge plainly that the whole must ultimately be referred to God;\* and this would set aside not only the equity of eternal punishment, but of punishment for sin altogether. Thus instead of every mouth being stopped, and all the world becoming guilty before God, all men would be furnished with a substantial plea in arrest of judgment, and in excuse of punishment, whether of long or of short duration. And thus the greatest criminal might appear before the bar of Heaven, and plead as you have taught him—‘I am what my Creator made me’†; or as Paul expresses the plea of the reprobate—‘Why doth he ‘yet find fault, for who hath resisted his ‘will?’ Or, in an immediate address to the Creator\* himself—‘Why hast thou made me thus?’ ‡

The above representation of all punishment as the consequence of sin by an immutable and eternal law of nature—or rather of

\* Review, p. 41. † Ibid, 33.---‡ Rom. ix. 19, 20.

the God of nature,—silences, with me, all complaints of its cruelty or injustice; while the doctrine of redemption by the Son of God opens a vista through the gloom of this subject, that converts my silence into praise.—O Sir, if you and I should be the subjects of this mercy, we shall find such abundant reason for humility and gratitude as it respects ourselves, as will make us well satisfied to leave our fellow sinners in his hands, and say—‘Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?’ In this temper I remain,

Your’s, &c.

## LETTER VIII.

*Unitarian Notions of Atonement.*

REV. SIR,

BEFORE we enter on the doctrine of atonement, I shall attempt to wipe away an aspersiōn on Mr. Wilberforce, and the friends of evangelical truth, for which there appears to me no just occasion. I allude to your charge against us, of representing the ‘ Father and the Son as distinct beings, of different, and even *opposite* characters ; the Father stern, severe, and inflexible ; the Son all gentleness and compassion ; submitting to bear his Father’s wrath, and to appease his anger, by substituting himself in the stead of the sinner\*. It is impossible to regard these two characters with equal affection, and the love of the *imaginary* Christ robs the living and true God of his honour and homage\*.’

\* Page 126.

Some parts of this charge appear to me totally untrue, and the rest exaggerated.

1. It is *not true* that we represent the Father and Son as *distinct beings*. On the contrary, Mr. B. knows that the creeds and confessions of all Trinitarian churches represent them as *one being*—as *one God* : according to the Son's declaration, 'I and my Father are one.'

Again, it is *not true* that we represent them as '*different and even opposite characters*;' because we always insist that the Son is '*the express image of the Father*,' possessing the same divine perfections, both natural and moral; as well, therefore, may the wax and the seal be supposed to bear different characters, as the Father and the Son.

It is *not true*, as this supposes and insinuates, that we represent the Son's sufferings as the *cause* of the Father's love. On the contrary, we constantly maintain that the Father's love and mercy induced him to give his Son. 'God *so* loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life!'

Lastly. It is *not true* that by honouring the Son

Son we dishonour the Father; at least, if the Son himself may be believed: for he says that ‘ the Father judgeth no man; but hath  
 ‘ committed all judgment unto the Son:  
 ‘ that all men should honour the Son, even  
 ‘ as they honour the Father: He that ho-  
 ‘ noureth not the Son, honoureth not the Fa-  
 ‘ ther which hath sent him.’

2. That part of the charge is *exaggerated*, which accuses us with ‘ representing the Fa-  
 ‘ ther as stern, severe, inflexible; the Son all  
 ‘ gentleness and compassion.’ It is true in-  
 deed, that we represent the Deity as

‘ Full-orb’d, in his whole round of rays complete.’

Nor dare we sacrifice the glory of any of his attributes to advance the others; or reduce them to any human standard of ideal excellence.

We believe that God is equally, (i. e. infinitely) great and good, just and merciful: That he hates sin and is angry at the sinner\*; yet is well pleased to display pardoning mercy thro’ the atonement he has provided, as I shall have occasion presently to shew. But we do not confine these attri-

\* Jer. xlv, 4.---Ps. vii, 11.



butes to the Father, since, as already hinted, we believe the Father and Son to be one God—‘the same in substance, equal in power and glory.’ So far from representing the Son as ‘all gentleness and compassion,’ we know that ‘the Lamb of God’ is also ‘the Lion of the tribe of Judah;’ and we look for him a second time from heaven, to take vengeance on his enemies. Thus Dr. Watts, the writer particularly pointed at, in his hymns :

- ‘ His words of prophecy reveal
- ‘ Eternal counsels, deep designs;
- ‘ His grace and *vengeance* shall fulfil
- ‘ The peaceful and the *dreadful* lines.\*

These hints premised, we proceed to consider the doctrine of the ATONEMENT.—This doctrine of the cross appears as much foolishness to you, and the philosophers of this age, as it did to those of the first age of christianity. A circumstance that should make you cautious, lest you also stumble at the stumbling stone† which is laid in Zion.

\* Hymns xxv. b. 1.---See also Hymns xxviii, xxix.---  
Psaln ii. &c. † Rom. ix, 32, 33.

In opening this part of the controversy, you give us three different schemes of the atonement, affecting to doubt which Mr. Wilberforce would prefer. I call this *affectation*, because, after the attachment Mr. W. had professed to the articles of the church of England, and to the Calvinistic writers, or even from the expressions you quote, I should suppose you could have no suspicion of his leaning to Arminianism; much less to the more novel hypothesis of Dr. Taylor. Yet, as writing a *practical* discourse, and mentioning points of doctrine only incidentally, Mr. W. might not think it necessary to state his principles systematically; but rested in a general and scriptural definition of the nature of Christianity, as ‘ a scheme  
 ‘ for justifying the ungodly by Christ’s dy-  
 ‘ ing for them:’ a proposition so unexceptionable, that you admit all Christians must give it a verbal assent, however different may be their ideas respecting it.

I might here object to your statement of the *Calvinistic* doctrine of atonement, as inaccurate and defective; being founded rather on the principles of commercial, than of legislative justice—upon the idea of sin being  
 rather

rather a debt in a literal sense than a crime ; which idea is opposed by the most judicious Calvinists,\* and favoured by the Socinians, who derive therefrom some of their most considerable objections to our hypothesis.

It is true, that sins are called *debts* in scripture, as well as trespasses ; but it is sufficiently evident that the term is figurative ; for debts, literally such, may be paid in kind : But as the man whose life is forfeited by crimes, is said to *owe* it to his country, and to the laws ; so we, by our transgressions, become indebted to the divine justice ; and, if pardoned, owe our salvation to the blood of Christ, as the price of our redemption.—Your statement of the *Arminian* hypothesis seems equally vague and incorrect, since it is by no means peculiar to that, as distinguished from the Calvinistic, to exhibit ‘ the evil ‘ and demerit of sin, and the displeasure of ‘ God against it†.’ On the doctrine of atonement many Arminian writers agree with us, to consider it as a divine expedient, whereby a way is opened for the consistent exercise of

\* See Owen on Divine Justice, ch. xi.---Stillingfleet’s Doctrine of Christ’s satisfaction, ch. xi. sec. 3-6.

† Review, p. 7.

mercy, in all the methods which sovereign wisdom and goodness should see proper.

‘ The death of Jesus (you say) is sometimes called a *Propitiation*, because it put an end to the Mosaic œconomy, and introduced a new and more liberal dispensation, under which the Gentiles, who were before regarded as enemies, are admitted into a state of amity and reconciliation; that is, into a state of privilege similar to the Jews\*.’ As you, Sir, profess yourself a friend to critical examination, permit us to analyse this extraordinary passage.

1. The death of Christ is called a *Propitiation*, ‘ because it put an end to the Mosaic œconomy;’ the Mosaic œconomy must be then a state of enmity against God, or wherefore should its termination be considered as a propitiation,—that which restores peace and amity?—2. It is called a propitiation, because thereby the Gentiles were admitted to the same state of amity with the Jews; but the Jews, as appears by the last remark, were not in a state of amity, but enmity.—So then this propitiation was so

\* Review, p. 18.

called for two contrary reasons; to the Jews it was a propitiation, because it put an *end* to their privileges, together with their œconomy; and to the Gentiles, because it entitled them to similar.—But let us proceed.

‘ It is also occasionally called a *Sacrifice*, having been the seal of that new covenant into which God is pleased to enter with his human offspring, by which a resurrection to immortal life and happiness is promised, without distinction, to all who are truly virtuous.’—Here observe, 1. The death of Christ is called a sacrifice ‘ occasionally’—on how many occasions we shall see presently. 2. It is ‘ called a sacrifice (you say) as having been the seal’ of the ‘ new covenant;’ but if the death of Christ be called a sacrifice merely because it is a seal, then may every seal of a covenant be called a sacrifice; circumcision, for instance, which was ‘ a seal of the righteousness of faith.’ 3. This seal is affixed to a covenant of which I can find nothing in the Bible: God’s covenant not being made with ‘ the truly virtuous,’ as you employ that heathenish phrase, but with his redeemed people—those who



reverence and obey him. 4 What had Jesus to do with a covenant in which he was no party? Could he seal a covenant made, and completely fulfilled, with thousands of these virtuous persons before he existed? Or with thousands unborn at his death, and even yet unborn? If Jesus was but a man, like the other prophets, how did he seal (or confirm) the covenant\* more than David, or Isaiah, or Paul, or a thousand others?

Lastly, ‘Believers in Christ are also said to have *redemption through his blood*, because they are released by the christian covenant from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the bondage of idolatry.’—But if Jesus be only a man, like ourselves, and his death has no more concern with the salvation of mankind than that of another prophet, in what rational sense can his blood be said to procure a release from Jewish ceremonies, or Gentile idolatries? The former continued near forty years after Christ’s decease; and the abolition of the latter might, according to your scheme, with far more propriety, be ascribed to the preaching of Paul than to the death of Jesus.

\* Dan. ix, 24, 27.

These remarks may shew the absurdity of your novel interpretations; but my grand objections are yet behind, and must be reserved for subsequent Letters, when they will appear in the form of arguments in favour of the Atonement.—At present, I would only add, that another objection of great weight with me against these interpretations is, that they have no proper reference to the moral state of mankind; nor to that deliverance from guilt and punishment, which is the grand object of Christ's redemption, and the hope and confidence of your

Servant for the Truth's sake, &c.

## LETTER IX.

*The Origin and Design of Sacrifices.*

REV. SIR,

THE origin of sacrifices is a subject of too much extent and difficulty to be fully investigated in this place. I may be permitted to remark, however, that the idea of propitiating the Deity by bloody offerings, is so far from being dictated by mere reason, that the wisest heathens generally despised and condemned it; as well they might, knowing nothing of their divine appointment and design: yet the practice is so ancient, and obtained to such an extent, that it is difficult to account for its origin satisfactorily, in any other way than from divine Revelation. Taking the book of Genesis for our guide, which I hope you will allow me to quote as the most ancient and authentic record, we find the practice not only tolerated, but approved of God, in the immediate son of our first parents, Abel; and if we may believe

believe the testimony of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, this sacrifice was offered up in *faith*, and on that account chiefly was accepted. This strongly implies a divine institution, since true faith must have for its object the revealed will of God; yet, I cannot conceive these sanguinary rites would ever have been adopted by divine wisdom, or admitted into the Mosaic worship, but from their having some important typical design; especially as I find, that whenever they became mere ceremonies, and were not practised from a principle of obedience to the God of Israel, and (as I apprehend) with a view to their ultimate and typical design, they were always spoken of with the utmost contempt and abhorrence.\*

The sacrifice of Abel, however, I by no means suppose to be the first, since it was offered in the second century of the world. Soon after the fall, we read of our first parents being clothed by God himself, or by his order, with coats of skins, for which I know but one way of accounting,

\* See Isa. i. 11---15. lxvi. 3. Amos v. 21, &c.

namely, that of supposing them the skins of beasts sacrificed \*. And, as in that early period of society more must have been expressed in actions than in words, I cannot help thinking something moral and typical was intended; probably to shew the insufficiency of their own righteousness, or acts of penitence; (properly figured, as some think, by a girdle of rough fig-leaves); and point out that robe of righteousness which he should provide, who was himself to be the great sacrifice for sin†. For, whatever may be thought of such circumstances in this cold philosophizing age,

\* Some wise-acres have, I know, fancied that the skins here intended were those of our first parents themselves; but whether it is to be supposed they now first stepped into their skins; or whether their hides were tanned upon their backs by the scorching sun-beams, is what I am not informed.

† From this circumstance I suppose originated, not only the wearing skins for cloathing, but especially the priests of Hercules being thus arrayed. You know also, it was customary for those who sought for oracular dreams, or miraculous cures, to sleep on the skins of their own sacrifices in the temples of Faunus and Æsculapius: and Lucian, in particular, mentions a remarkable custom of the offerer squatting on the skin of a sacrificed sheep, and placing its head upon his own.

it



it is certain, that in the early ages of mankind all their actions were full of import ; though afterward the actions were continued when their design was lost : and to the multitude, both of Jews and Gentiles, they might appear unmeaning ceremonies.

This appears to me, as it has done to many, the original institution of sacrifices, though it gives us indeed but a glance at the event. For the events of very ancient history pass rapidly before us, like the scenes in some optical exhibitions ; in which only the most prominent objects can be distinguished, and of them only the most striking features. Supposing this, however, to be the origin of these rights we come naturally to the subsequent offerings of Abel, Noah, and the Hebrew patriarchs.

It has indeed been objected with a shew of reason, that part of the sacrifice being generally designed for food, and animal food not being permitted before the flood, it may therefore be supposed, that animals were not slain. But this consequence does not follow ; sacrifices might be instituted at the above period, and the circumstance of feeding on

the flesh, might be a rite added in subsequent times.

I shall not weary you with tracing the patriarchal sacrifices : permit me, however, to mention that of Isaac, to which I conceive our Lord himself alludes, when he says, ‘ Abraham desired to see my day ; he saw it, and was glad\*.’ This has been so ingeniously, and I think satisfactorily, illustrated by Bp. *Warburton* †, that I shall here only observe, that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews represents this likewise as an eminent act of faith, in which the Patriarch received again his son, as one alive from the dead, ‘ in a figure ‡’, or parabolical representation of our redemption by the death and resurrection of the Son of God ; to whom I conceive the name of the place *JEHOVAH JIREH*, was an allusion, for it was on these mountains that Jerusalem afterwards was builded, and the Lord was crucified.

But I wish not to lay any undue stress upon conjectures, however learned or ingeni-

\* John viii. 56.

† Divine Legation. Part ii. book vi. sec. 5.

‡ *Εν παραβολῇ* Heb. xi. 19.

ous: I therefore pass on to what is of more importance to our subject; namely, to enquire in what light the Jewish legislator represented the enjoined sacrifices, and how the pious Hebrews themselves understood them.

The Hebrew sacrifices were of four kinds.

1. The MINCHA, or oblation of flour, cakes, or new corn, as a thank-offering in acknowledgement of the gifts of providence\* .
2. *The peace-offering*, which was also a free-will offering, was accompanied with a sacrifice, of which a part only was to be burned, and the rest eaten†.
3. *The sin-offering*, which, whether for sins of ignorance, or otherwise, was to be accompanied with the sprinkling of the victim's blood before the Lord‡.
4. *The holocaust*, or whole burnt-offering: of these the chief was that offered on the great day of atonement§.

Now on these sacrifices we may remark,

1. That the object of all the bloody sacrifices, and of no other, was to make atonement, and that it was the blood especially that made the atonement. ‘ For it

\* Lev. vi. 14.

† Lev. vii. 11.

‡ Lev. v. 14. vi. 2.

§ Num. xxix. 8.

Now

‘ is the *blood* that maketh *atonement* for the  
‘ soul \*.’

2. That this atonement was made by the  
sacrifice *bearing the sin* of the offender, and  
*suffering for him*. Of the culprit, it is said,  
‘ he shall put his hand upon the head of the  
‘ burnt-offering; and it shall be accepted *for*  
‘ him, to make *atonement for him* †.’ ‡

\* Lev. xvii. 11.

† Lev. i. 2---4. See also Exod. xxix. throughout---  
xxx. ditto---Lev. iv. ditto, &c.

‡ Surely Dr. Priestley could never have read this  
text, or the parallel passages referred to in the margin,  
when he asserted (Familiar Illustration of certain pas-  
sages of Scripture, sec. v.) that ‘ Sacrifices for sin  
‘ under the law of Moses are never considered as  
‘ standing in the place of the sinner; but as the peo-  
‘ ple were never to approach the divine presence upon  
‘ any occasion without *some offering*, agreeable to the  
‘ standing and universal custom in the East, with re-  
‘ spect to all sovereigns and great men; so no person  
‘ after being unclean, could be introduced to the Ta-  
‘ bernacle, or Temple service, without an offering  
‘ proper to the occasion.’ On the contrary, except  
in the case of the Mincha, or Meat-offering, we never  
read of sacrifices under the idea of presents; but always  
as atonements, ransoms (or prices of redemption),  
and sin-offerings on the head of which the crimes of  
the people were confessed, and to which they were  
imputed.

3. That

3. That, in no instance did these atonements set aside the obligations of morality; but in cases of personal injury, restitution notwithstanding was required to the injured party\*. The atonement was to God alone.

4. That no atonement was appointed or admitted in capital cases, as murder, adultery, &c. because these crimes, under that dispensation, admitted no pardon; whatever cases admitted of atonement supposed a pardon.

Such was the primary meaning of the sacrificial language employed in the Mosaic law: let us now enquire—Whether these rites had any figurative or typical allusion to the death of Christ, the christian sacrifice; and whether the ancient Jews so understood them?

That the Mosaic sacrifices had a designed typical allusion to the sacrifice of Christ cannot be doubted, if we admit the divine authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews, great part of which is written to explain these allusions. The writer of this Epistle shews, that whatever was defective in the type was in the antitype complete: and describes Christ

\* Lev. vi. 4, 5.



as both the priest and sacrifice who ' hath  
 ' made an end of sin by the sacrifice of him-  
 ' self.' The epistles to the Galatians, the  
 Ephesians, and the Corinthians, express the  
 same doctrine, as we shall have farther  
 occasion to observe as we proceed.

Several circumstances concur to render  
 such an allusion probable. There is nothing  
 in ceremonies themselves, much less in san-  
 guinary rites like these, which can be sup-  
 posed acceptable to a wise, holy, and bene-  
 volent Deity : it is therefore rational to sup-  
 pose that the God of Israel had a farther end  
 than merely the observance of these rites  
 and ceremonies ; especially as so great ex-  
 actness was required in all the punctillios of  
 the service.

Farther, it appears in fact, that, from the  
 beginning, pious sacrificers had farther views  
 than the mere performance of such external  
 services. Abel was accepted of God because  
 he sacrificed in faith ; Abraham saw the day  
 of the Messiah and rejoiced ; and in later  
 times, the case is much more clear. I will  
 instance in David, in Isaiah, and in Daniel.

*David* describes the Messiah as a Priest  
 after

after the order of Melchisedec \*, that is, a perpetual priest. He represents God as not pleased, nor satisfied with the Mosaic sacrifices ; but Messiah as offering himself, according to ancient predictions, in their stead †. He represents him not only as obeying, but as suffering also from the wickedness of men, and mentions several circumstances of his crucifixion ‡. All these passages are, in the New Testament, applied to Jesus Christ ; and prove that David was not ignorant of his priestly character and sacrifice.

*Isaiab* is still clearer on this subject. He represents Messiah as offering up his *own* life and soul as an atonement for sinners.

‘ He was wounded for our transgressions, he  
 ‘ was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and  
 ‘ with his stripes we are healed. All we  
 ‘ like sheep have gone astray . . . and the  
 ‘ Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us  
 ‘ all. . . . When thou shalt make his soul  
 ‘ an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he  
 ‘ shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of  
 ‘ the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall

\* Psalm, cx. 4. † Ib. xl. 6, 7. ‡ Ib. xxii. lxix.

‘ see of the travel of his soul and be satis-  
 ‘ ed : by his knowledge shall my righteous  
 ‘ servant justify many : for he shall bear  
 ‘ their iniquities . . . . He poured out his  
 ‘ soul unto the death : and he was numbered  
 ‘ with the transgressors, and he bare the  
 ‘ sins of many, and made intercession for  
 ‘ the transgressors\*.’

Lastly, *Daniel*, referring to the times and  
 work of the Messiah, says, ‘ Seventy weeks  
 ‘ are determined upon thy people, and upon  
 ‘ thy holy city, to finish the transgressions,  
 ‘ and to make an end of sins, and to *make*  
 ‘ *reconciliation for iniquity*, and to bring in  
 ‘ everlasting righteousness, and to seal up  
 ‘ the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the  
 ‘ most holy . . . . And after threescore and  
 ‘ two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but  
 ‘ not for himself . . . . And he shall confirm  
 ‘ the covenant with many for one week : and  
 ‘ in the midst of the week he shall cause the  
 ‘ sacrifice and oblation to cease,’ &c.†

I confess that in our Lord’s time, the Jews  
 appear, in general, to have lost these princi-  
 ples ; and to be, in most respects, completely

\* Isa. liii. 4—12.

† Dan. ix. 24.—27.

ignorant of the true character of the Messiah. They had evidently no idea of his suffering, and rising from the dead; yet we know their scriptures were full of these truths. Wherefore our Lord, when he saw the ignorance of the disciples he met with on the road to Emmaus, exclaimed, ‘ O fools, and ‘ slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to ‘ have suffered these things, and to enter ‘ into his glory? and beginning at Moses ‘ and *the Prophets*, he expounded unto them ‘ all the scriptures concerning himself\*.’

It is, however, sufficiently clear that the Jews had, and perhaps still have, a general idea that their ritual contained some mystical sense, though they know not how to explain it, and are fearful of giving advantages to the christians. *Josephus*, for instance, makes a kind of philosophical allegory of the Tabernacle and its furniture, which, though sufficiently fanciful, clearly proves that all these things were supposed to contain a mystery†. Nor are the more ancient and respectable Rabbins hostile to these ideas. *R. Mena-*

\* Luke xxiv. 25---27. † Antiq. lib. iii. cap. 7.

*chem* for instance, supposes the Mosaic sacrifices pointed at ‘ the offering which Michael offereth for the souls of the just \*’; though at the same time he confesses that for farther knowledge they must wait until ‘ the Spirit from above be poured out upon them †.’

As to the *Pagan* sacrifices, I think it cannot be controverted, that their uniform object was to expiate, to make atonement, or to procure reconciliation with their Gods, whom they supposed to be offended. For this purpose their sacrifices were accompanied by petitions to that effect, the person who brought the sacrifices making confession of his guilt. †

Nor was the circumstance of one man dying for another, or for a city, or a people, at all unusual among the Heathen. The Massilians were wont to make expiation for their city, by taking a person devoted, imprecating on his head all the evil to which the city was liable, and casting him into the sea as a sacrifice to Neptune, with these

\* Quoted Ainsl. in Lev. i. 2.

† See Danet’s Dictionary of Antiqu. in *Sacrifice*:



words— ‘ Be thou our expiation\*.’ So the *Decii* devoted themselves for the salvation of the Roman army ; and Menœceus, in obedience to an oracle, devoted himself to death for the city of Thebes, then in danger of destruction from the Argives.

In the heathen sacrifices many circumstances of similitude to those of the Jews might easily be traced ; but I shall mention one only, which is also noticed by Bp. Stillingfleet, who observes, that *Herodotus* gives this reason why the Egyptians never eat the head of any living creature, namely ‘ That  
 ‘ when they offer up a sacrifice, they make a  
 ‘ solemn execration upon it, that if any evil  
 ‘ were to fall upon the persons who sacrificed, or upon all Egypt, it might be turned upon the head of that beast :’ and *Plutarch* adds, that after this solemn execration,  
 ‘ They cut off the head, and of old, threw  
 ‘ it into the river, but then [in his time]  
 ‘ gave it to strangers †.—Here I pause, and remain

Yours, &c.

\* Περιψημα ημων γενε, ητοι σωτηρια και απολυτρωσις. ‘ Be  
 ‘ thou our *Peripsēma*, i.e. our salvation and redemption.’

† Herod. lib. ii. cap. 39. Plutarch de Iside: quoted Stillingfleet on Christ’s Satisfaction, p. 248.

## LETTER X.

*The Scripture Doctrine of Atonement.*

REV. SIR,

**B**EFORE I proceed any farther with this argument, permit me to propose a few queries.

1. Knowing, as you do, the public prejudices on the doctrine of the atonement, Do you not think it right to avoid any expressions in your writings or discourses which would tend to countenance an opinion you so disapprove?

2. Were you to preach, or write to Jews, or heathen, having the same prejudices, would you not still more carefully avoid countenancing such prejudices?

3. Supposing Paul, Peter, &c. to be men of common sense and prudence, would they not have done the same? Would they not have been careful to avoid expressions which have an evident tendency to nurse people in ignorance or error?

Prefuming

Presuming these queries admit of no answer but in the affirmative, let us now examine the language of the New Testament on this subject, as addressed both to Jews and Gentiles.

1. Jesus Christ ‘gave himself an offering,  
 ‘and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling  
 ‘favour.\*—We are sanctified through the  
 ‘offering of the body of Jesus Christ once.—  
 ‘For by one offering he hath perfected for  
 ‘ever them that are sanctified†.’ On comparing the last passage with the context, it appears obvious; first, that the sacrifices and offerings under the old dispensation were not in themselves, or on their own account, acceptable to God. ‘Sacrifice and offering  
 ‘thou wouldst not, for it was not possible  
 ‘that the blood of bulls and of goats should  
 ‘take away sins: and farther, that their express design was to point to another and better sacrifice, even that of Christ himself. ‘Then  
 ‘I said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.’ He taketh away the first, ‘the offerings of  
 ‘the law,’ that he may establish the second—‘the offering of the body of Jesus

\* Eph. v. 2.

† Heb. x. 10, 14.

‘Christ

‘ Christ once for all.’ ‘ Now once in the end  
 ‘ of the world hath he appeared to put  
 ‘ away sin by the sacrifice of himself \*.’

2. His *blood*, in particular, is called, ‘ the  
 ‘ blood of sprinkling †,’ alluding to the rite  
 of sprinkling the blood of atonement on the  
 altar : and himself is said, as the christian  
 High Priest, to have presented his own blood  
 ‘ before the presence of God for us ‡;’ yea,  
 the whole of our redemption is attributed to  
 the efficacy of his blood; and that, not in a  
 few, but in a great number of passages. ||

3. Christ is called ‘ the Lamb of God—  
 ‘ a Lamb without spot—the Lamb slain—  
 ‘ the Lamb which taketh away the sins of  
 ‘ the world, &c. § and he is particularly  
 compared to the pascal lamb.—‘ Christ our  
 passover is sacrificed for us \*\*.’

4. He is said to be the ‘ *propitiation* for  
 ‘ our sins—a propitiation through faith in his  
 ‘ blood ††,’ which either conveys the idea

\* Heb. x. 1---10. ix. 22---23.

† Heb. xii. 24. comp. xi. 28.

‡ Heb. ix. 7---14.

|| Eph. ii. 13. 1 Pet. i. 19. 1 John, i. 7. Rev. v. 9. &c.

§ John i. 29. 1 Pet. i. 19. Rev. v. 12. xiii. 8.

\*\* 1 Cor. v. 7.—†† Rom. iii. 25. 1 John ii. 2. iv. 10.

that

that his sufferings were the medium by which the Deity became propitious to guilty creatures, or it has no meaning within the extent of my comprehension\*. There are indeed two Greek words translated by this term *propitiation*, the one used by Paul is admitted to signify, literally, the *mercy-seat*, or propitiatory, which was the cover of the ark; and the same Hebrew word used for this cover, being also employed metaphorically to signify covering by way of pardon and atonement; hence the corresponding Greek word is applied to the sacrifice of Christ. The other word, used by John†, unquestionably signifies propitiation or atonement, and is applied by the Septuagint to

\* ἱλαστήριον in the LXX, answers to the Hebrew כפרת *Cappareth*, the *covering* of the ark, which was overlaid with pure gold, whereon was sprinkled the blood of the victim on the great day of atonement.

† ἱλασμος from ἱλαομαι to be propitious. There is no pretence that I know, for rendering this, *mercy-seat*. Why then are the two passages of John passed over without remark, while that in Romans is insisted upon with a severe reflection upon Dr. Doddridge and the orthodox? See Mr. B's Review, p. 214.



the ram of atonement, and the sin-offering of the Jews\*.

5. Christ is declared to have been ‘made sin,’ or a sin-offering ‘for us†.’ If this be the sense, as *Dr. Priestley* insists, then he is the anti-type of the Jewish sacrifices, as already observed; and as the sins of the offerers were imputed to the devoted animal, so were the sins of men ‘made to meet (as the prophet expresses it,) on the head of the Messiah, and he was treated as the vilest of sinners on that account: and the antithesis requires us to explain the other part of the sentence in the same manner, as implying that the righteousness of Christ is so imputed to us, that we are treated as righteous persons on his account. I do not mean, however, that his righteousness is imputed to supply the defects of ours; because I have no idea of our own righteousness being brought into the account at all. But let the passage, answer for itself. ‘God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;

\* Numb. v. 9: Ezek. xlv. 27. xlv. 19. See also 2 Macc. iii. 33.

† 1 Cor v. 19.-21.

and

‘ and hath committed unto us the word of  
 ‘ reconciliation.—For he hath made him  
 ‘ who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we  
 ‘ might be made the righteousness of God  
 ‘ in him.’

6. Christ is farther said to ‘ *bear the sins*  
 ‘ of many—to bear our sins in his own body  
 ‘ on the tree\*,’ &c. It is objected, that to  
*bear* our sins, is strictly to *bear away*, or re-  
 move them†; and your learned predecessor,  
*Dr. Priestley*, who agrees with you in this,  
 insists farther ‡, that the phrase *bearing sin*  
 is never applied in the Old Testament but  
 to the Scape-goat: another instance, that  
 great critics are not always the best textua-  
 ries. This instance, however, may furnish  
 us with a most exact and beautiful illustrati-  
 on of the scripture doctrines of imputation  
 and substitution; for the scape-goat † was  
 to have all the sins of the congregation laid  
 upon it, and then to be let go that he ‘ might  
 ‘ bear upon him all their iniquities into a  
 ‘ land not inhabited,’ that is, a wilderness ||.  
 It is true, this type was defective, because it

\* Heb. ix. 28.      1 Pet. iii. 18.

† Review, p. 68.

‡ Priestley's Familiar Illustrations, § v.

|| Lev. xvi. 21, 22.

was not slain ; whence the introduction of two goats in the institution, one of which was slain to represent the death of Jesus, and the other sent away, to figure the removal of the people's sins, into a state of perpetual oblivion ; it being impossible to represent both these circumstances fully by the same animal. You insist, indeed, that this means ' no more than that God, by Jesus Christ, communicates the blessings of the gospel with equal freedom both to Jews and Gentiles ;' so ' that the errors and vices of a heathen state are no longer a bar to the exercise of mercy\*.' This is admitting the mystical design of the Jewish sacrifices, though it gives a very lame account of them ; viz. a goat was to be sent into the wilderness with the sins of the *Jews*, in order to shew God meant to forgive the sins of the *Gentiles* !

That, however, the term bearing sins under the Old Testament is not confined to their *removal*, as Dr. P. pretends, is extremely clear from its being used in a connection, in which that sense cannot be at

\* Review, p. 69.

all admitted. I allude to the case of a person bearing his *own* iniquity \*, where it can mean nothing less than being chargeable with its guilt, and exposed to its punishment. When, therefore, the Messiah is said to bear the sins of his people, and that in connection with his sufferings, is it not natural, and even necessary, to understand it in the sense of his bearing their guilt, and suffering the penalty? not, indeed, that he was guilty, any otherwise than by imputation.

The only material objection I can recollect to this, is the manner in which Matthew applies this expression of the prophet (himself took our infirmities †, &c.) But this will only shew that Christ bore our sins in more

\* See Lev. v. 1. xix. 8. xx. 17. where, for a man to bear his iniquity, is evidently to be liable to its consequences; and when such an one became sensible of his guilt, and repented, it is provided that he should bring a sacrifice (if the case admitted one), confess his guilt over it, (which was accompanied by the imposition of his hands; See Exod. xxix. 15. Lev. i. 4. iii. 2. iv. 4, 29, 33, &c.) and with this sacrifice an atonement was to be made, and the sinner no more bare his iniquity, nor was exposed to punishment;—but wherefore? Because the sacrifice had borne and suffered for it.

† Matt. viii. 7.

respects



respects than one—He bore them by *sympathy* and kindness, and from that principle removed their painful consequences by his miraculous power. He bore them also by *substitution*, suffering their desert—He bore ‘our sins in his own body on the tree \*,’ and thus removed them away for ever.

Let us, however, advert again to the prophet Isaiah, and allow him to be his own expositor. ‘Surely he hath BORN our griefs and CARRIED our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace [or as Bp. Lowth renders it—the chastisement by which our peace was affected] was LAID UPON him, and with [or by] his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath LAID UPON him the iniquity of us all†.’—Again, in ver. 10. ‘Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul

\* 1 Pet. iii. 18: Isa. liii, 4, &c.



‘ an offering for sin ;’ [Bp. Lowth reads, If  
 ‘ his soul shall make (or be made) a propi-  
 ‘ tiatory sacrifice ;] He shall see his seed,  
 ‘ he shall prolong his days, and the plea-  
 ‘ sure of the Lord shall prosper in his  
 ‘ hand. He shall see of the travel of his  
 ‘ soul and shall be satisfied: by his know-  
 ‘ ledge shall my righteous servant justify  
 ‘ many, for he shall BEAR their iniqui-  
 ‘ ties.—And again, in the last verse—He  
 ‘ BARE the sin of many, and made inter-  
 ‘ cession for the transgressors \*.’

Let an impartial enquirer, after weighing the evidence here produced, see if he can satisfy his conscience in supposing the prophet meant any thing short of this—that the Messiah should suffer in the stead of sinners, and bear the punishment of their sins.

7. Christ is said to have ‘ *redeemed* us from  
 ‘ the curse of the law, being made a curse

\* In the original, (ver. 4. 11, 12.) the prophet has used two verbs as nearly synonymous; נשא and סבל; if there be any difference, it should seem (as Mr Parkhurst observes), the latter is the most emphatical. See Isaiah xli. 4. Both are usually applied to bearing burdens, and to bearing punishment, especially the former: See particularly, Prov. xix. 19.

‘ for us,\*’ by having suffered the cursed death of the cross on our account; for ‘ he ‘ was delivered for our offences, and raised; ‘ for our justification†.’ The connexion in which the first of these passages is found affords the clearest evidence of the doctrine for which I plead. The apostle states, that no man can be justified by the works of the law, inasmuch as no man had perfectly observed it, but all are obnoxious to the curse: those, however, who live by faith, he assures us, are redeemed from the curse by Christ himself being made a curse for them. If this language does not convey the idea, that Christ endured *that* curse to which transgressors of the law, as such, are exposed, we may for ever despair of knowing a writer’s meaning from his words.

\* Gal. iii. 13. A clergyman, who seems fond of writing against the doctrine of his own church, and the articles he has solemnly and repeatedly subscribed, tells us, that the *curse* of a law is not its penalty, but its *severity*. ‘ Just as, from their severity, Draco’s laws ‘ are said to be written in blood.’ Ludlam’s Six Essays, Essay 3. A pretty reflexion this for a christian divine—to describe the laws of heaven as sanguinary, and their Author as a tyrant!

† Rom. iv. 25.

As

As Christ is called our *Redeemer* and our *Ransom*, so his blood is said to be the *price* of our redemption \*. For we are not ‘redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish.—Ye are not your own; but bought with a price,’ &c. It is true, indeed, Moses is called a *redeemer* in one instance †, but it is merely in the sense of a deliverer to the Jews; for neither Moses, nor any other, is ever said to have given himself a ransom for them, or as the price of their redemption, as Christ is, in the passages above cited, and in many others.

9. Jesus is expressly said to sustain the characters of a *Mediator*, and a *surety* for us. He is the ‘*MEDIATOR* of the new covenant’—‘the Mediator between God and men ‡.’ Now a mediator is a middle person, who makes peace between parties which are at variance. Such is ‘the man Christ Jesus,’ and if it be enquired, how he

\* Job xix. 25. 1 Tim. ii. 6. 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.  
1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

† Acts vii. 35. in the Greek.

‡ Heb. viii. 6. ix. 15. xii. 24. 1 Tim. ii. 5:

made peace, the answer is ready, from divine authority—it was ‘through the blood of his cross \*.’—He is the SURETY also of this covenant †: which, whatever be the exact import of the term, implies that he was to act on the part of sinners, for he could not be a surety on the part of Deity.

Lastly, None of these particulars were refinements of the apostles, or the effects of Jewish prejudices; since Christ himself, from the commencement of his public ministry, uniformly declared, that the one great end of his coming into the world was to lay down his life ‘for his sheep’—to ‘give his life a ransom for many’—to give his flesh and his blood for the life of men ‡.

Now, Sir, after reading the above quotations, what must I, what must any impartial reader think of the following assertions respecting the New Testament? viz. ‘That [therein] the death of Jesus is *never* represented as an atonement for sin—that we are never exhorted to ask any thing of God *for the sake of Christ*—nor is any blessing ever said to be granted to us upon

\* Col. i. 20.

† Heb. vii. 22.

‡ Matt. xx. 28. John x. 10, 11. vi. 51, &c.

‘that

‘ that consideration\*.’ The most charitable supposition would be that you had not read the New Testament : the fact appears to be, that you have read it, but under the influence of a system which entirely veils its natural and true meaning. Taking this brief abstract for the whole of what these writers have said in favour of the doctrine of Christ’s atonement, though in truth it is but a small part, permit me to ask, what would you have thought of a teacher in your societies, who should have thus incautiously expressed himself in conformity to the prejudices of Jews and Heathens ? Are there in fact any writers or preachers of your sentiments who thus express themselves ? Or would you in reading an author abounding in such forms of expressions, suppose him to be a Socinian or a Unitarian ? I should think it were impossible.

Let me, Sir, on this point be plain ; and permit me to call upon you to be frank, and avow your sentiments. Do not you, and other Gentlemen of your sentiments, suspect, after all the pains you have taken to make

\* Review, p. 112.



these writers speak like Unitarians, that they were really fanatic Calvinists? That you do, I cannot help inferring, as well from your conduct in the management of this controversy, as from my own views of scripture. While any expressions appear to you favourable to Unitarian principles, it is well; but when you perceive the current of their writings runs the other way, then you recur to foreign and forced criticism;\* I mean, to seek among classic authors for new and uncommon senses to words and prepositions, of which probably the writers never heard. In the next place, various readings and versions are referred to: and when these again fail, as they often will, your last resort is, to question their inspiration and authority. I am now prepared to hear upon the present subject, provided you find, as I think you must, that the evidence runs strong against you;—I am prepared to hear that these good

\* I beg not to be understood as objecting to criticism itself, but to its abuse, when employed to strain passages clearly on the opposite side; or when made the foundation of a system; for I must say with Mr. Robinson, and some others, ‘Woe be to the system which *rests* upon it.’

men were not at all times infallible ; that Peter and John certainly were illiterate, and Paul a man of strong educational prejudices ; that it is difficult to distinguish their genuine writings, and more so, what parts of them were inspired ; that certainly they were poor critics and philosophers ; and that our own reason, and the light of nature, are the safest guides. And here I confess I shall be completely silenced: for I do not mean to plead for scripture truths, independent of the authority of scripture.

I am, Your's, &c.

## LETTER XI.

*The Intercession of Christ.*

REV. SIR,

I SHOULD not have thought it necessary to introduce this subject, but for the following extraordinary passages.—‘ Jesus is indeed now alive, and, without doubt, employed in offices the most honourable and benevolent : but as we are totally ignorant of the place where he resides, and of the occupations in which he is engaged, there can be no proper foundation for religious addresses to him, nor of gratitude for favours now received, nor yet of confidence in his future interposition in our behalf. All affections and addresses of this nature are unauthorized by the Christian revelation, and are infringements on the prerogative of God \*.’

Had I met with this passage in some unknown author, I should have regretted his ignorance of the New Testament, and have

\* Review, p. 85.

supposed

supposed he had seen only some fragments of the gospels; little should I have supposed that such a passage could have been written by a teacher of christianity. Such however appears to be the fact, and may cure us of wondering at any thing from *rational* divines!

As you make no pretence to inspiration, permit us to examine, 1. The truth of your premises, and 2. The justness of your conclusions.

1. You know not *where* Jesus is; you seem in as much suspense as Mary was, yet without her anxiety, when she said, ‘ They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.’ The Apostles and Evangelists employ a very different language when they speak of their Lord’s glory since his resurrection.—They tell us, he has ‘ ascended into heaven—has entered into the presence of God for us—is sat down on the right-hand of the Majesty on high.’

Should you reply, you admit the residence of Christ in heaven, only that you know not where heaven is—what then? Does it follow from thence that there can be no com-

communications with it? I suppose you are as much acquainted with the heaven where Christ resides, as with heaven the abode of God and angels. It was the glory of the primitive christians to hold communion with the celestial world, their conversation was in heaven, their affections were set on things above, their communion was with the Father, and the Son. And if you, Sir, are a total stranger to the like experience, I much fear that you are not only ignorant where heaven is, but not in the way to find it. You know not where Jesus is, and have no expectations from him! You remind me, Sir, of some whose sentiments and language appear to have greatly corresponded with yours—‘ As for this Moses (said they) we wot not what is become of him ; up, make us gods that shall go before us.’

But you are equally ignorant of Christ’s present employment. An Apostle says, ‘ He is now at the right-hand of God, making intercession for us \*.’ But God, you say, ‘ has no *right*-hand.’ Literally, as a pure spirit, God indeed has *no hand*; but the

\* Col. iii. 1. Heb. vii. 25. viii. 1.



right-hand you know is the place of authority and power, Jesus is exalted to the throne of God. So weak an objection was unworthy of Thomas Paine, what shall we think of it from the learned Professor of Hackney College?—But you proceed—

This office of intercession is also ascribed to the Lord Jesus in another text \*. ‘ He ever liveth to make intercession for them.’ The exact import of the phrase, you think, it is very difficult to ascertain. ‘ Probably indeed (you say) *the writers themselves annexed no very distinct idea* to it.’ True; they were not philosophers, nor rational divines; and therefore, it is no wonder they had no distinct ideas; nor is it of much consequence either what were their ideas, or what their language, *if* they deserve no more respect than you pay them.

As you, however, appear more enlightened by philosophy, perhaps you may be able to affix some distinct ideas. The word in the original, rendered *intercession* †, you inform us, ‘ expresses any interference of one person *for, or against* another;’ so that for ought

\* Heb. vii. 25.

† ΕΝΤΥΧΑΝΕΙΩ.

appears, it may be uncertain from the text whether Jesus interferes either *for* or *against* us—this to be sure is a very distinct idea! —‘ Any interference,’—this certainly is a lucid criticism!—I believe it is pretty well agreed, that the term *Paracletos*, signifies a *pleader* in a public court ; and this I suppose is the general idea here intended ; but what opinion would you form of a Lexicographer, who should define *pleading* to be ‘ any interference’ of one person either ‘ for ‘ or against another?’—A definition equally applicable to a *soldier*, and many other professions, as to a lawyer.

You are indeed willing to take the fair side of the question, and to believe that the intercession of Jesus is in our favour ; yet you are confident, that all ‘ we can certainly learn ‘ from the Apostle’s declaration is, that Jesus, having been advanced to great dignity ‘ and felicity, is, by the appointment of God, ‘ continually employing his renovated and ‘ improved powers in some *unknown way* for ‘ the benefit of his church.’ This is the art by which rational Gentlemen get rid of the plain doctrines of scripture, reduce the faith of the gospel to scepticism, and travelling

velling ‘ from Dan to Beersheba,’ find all barren ground !

It is an unhappy circumstance in your investigation of scripture, that your philosophy always interferes with your theology. Christ is in heaven, you must admit ; but then the new system of astronomy comes in your way. If he dwell in some other planet or fixed star, supposing him to be a man, as you do, what connection can he have with our world ? If indeed, as Dr. Priestley seems to think, he resides somewhere in our atmosphere, there may be hopes of reaching him by a balloon—the best hope that many have of being where Jesus is !

As to myself, I feel it an object of little interest where may be the immediate residence of Christ's human nature, while it is united to divinity. Whether the Man Jesus sit on the circle (or orbit) of the earth, or dwell in the splendour of the sun, or the glory of the milky way, I believe he is in the immediate presence of God—‘ ever living  
‘ to make intercession for us.’

The best idea that I can form of the intercession of Christ, is from the office of the high-priest, who, when he entered into the

holy place, sprinkled the blood of atonement before the throne. No form of words was prescribed upon this occasion (as in blessing the people), and it is not certain that any words were made use of; it was 'the blood' of sprinkling' that interceded.

' Blood has a voice to pierce the skies,  
 ' *Revenge!* the blood of Abel cries :  
 ' But the dear stream when Christ was slain,  
 ' Speaks *peace* as loud from ev'ry vein.'

The representation of Christ in the Revelation of St. John, seem to intimate that the intercession of Jesus is of this nature; for there we find him as a lamb that had been slain \*; that is, with the mark of his wounds upon him; and it is very observable, that when Jesus appeared to Thomas after his resurrection, it was with the marks of all his wounds †.

2. From not knowing precisely where Jesus is, or how he is employed, you deny the propriety of any religious addresses to him. You seem to fear that, like Baal of old, he may be on a journey—or asleep, and cannot easily be awaked, and therefore

\* Rev. v. 6. &c.

† John xx. 27.

it can be of little use to worship him. Your inference, however, does not necessarily result from your premises, because the worship of Jesus is founded on his union with Deity. If he be a divine person, the local residence of his human nature is, in this respect, of little consequence. If he be *not*, then indeed his worship must be, as you represent it, ‘dishonourable to God, injurious to rational religion, and, in a strict sense, idolatrous \*.’

I am not disposed to enter into new discussions on the Trinitarian controversy, on which indeed little novelty can be expected; but as you have so repeatedly adverted to the subject of christian idolatry, I beg leave to lay before you, as an individual, my apology for a practice which you so pointedly condemn.

My reasons then for worshipping Jesus are grounded on his union with the Father; a union whereby he is *one* with him, filling the same throne, bearing the same titles, participating the same perfections, doing the same works, and receiving the same incommunicable honours. But it is of the last par-

\* Review, p. 130.



ticular only that I shall here offer evidence, and that in the briefest manner possible\*.

1. It is generally admitted by Arian, as well as Trinitarian writers, that Jesus Christ appeared under an angelic form to several of the patriarchs; now in some, at least, of these instances, I observe that he received divine honours†.

Many writers attempt to account for the adoration here spoken of from the eastern custom of prostration to superiors: but this argument is not founded on prostration only. He to whom Abraham bowed is stiled JEHOVAH, and speaks under that character. Joshua is commanded to put off his shoes; and Gideon offered sacrifice (as it should seem ‡,) to the angel that appeared to him. Are these instances of civil respect only?—Equally vain is it to recur to the idea of representation. Ambassadors never speak of

\* To prevent the charge of plagiarism, it may be necessary to observe, that the following remarks are copied, with some additions, from two letters I wrote in the Protestant Dissenters Mag. for August 1796, and Jan. 1797.

† See Gen. xviii. Joshua v. 13—15. Judges vi. 11---24.

‡ Judges vi. 17, &c.

their

their master in the first person. What would you, Sir, think of our minister at Vienna, if he were to tell the Emperor of Germany, ‘ I am the king of Great Britain ?’ Or of the Turkish Ambassador at our court, were he to say, ‘ I am the Grand Signior ?’

2. At his incarnation, Jesus was worshipped in the manger (among others) by the philosophic Magi \*, and (according to divine injunction), by the holy angels, ‘ Let all the angels of God worship him †.’

3. During the course of his ministry, he was not only adored by the multitudes he cured ‡, but also by his disciples §; and never refused such honours, nor reprovèd the worshippers; but on the contrary, commended their faith and conduct, as in the instance of the woman of Canaan ||.

4. At, and after his resurrection, he was worshipped by his apostles and disciples \*\*, and particularly by incredulous Thomas, who confessed him as his Lord and his God ††.

\* Matt. ii. 11.

† Heb. i. 6.

‡ Matt. viii. 2; ix. 18, &c.

§ Luke v. 8.

|| Matt. xv. 22---3.

\*\* Matt. xxviii. 9--17.

Luke xxiv. 52.

†† John xx. 28.

5. Paul repeatedly, and without scruple, prayed to him in the most clear and indisputable terms \*. John worshipped him in his divine visions †; and Stephen died in the very act of adoration, at the same time being filled with the Holy Ghost ‡.

6. In the book of the Revelation, we have the whole company of heaven, and universal nature, in the most humble and fervent manner, adoring him in the same terms and manner as his heavenly Father ||.

7. We have the express command of the Father to worship Jesus, and we are also told, that no honours paid to himself will be accepted, which are not, in like manner, paid to the Son also; and thus our very salvation is made dependent on it. ‘He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father §.’

8. It was not only the practice of the primitive christians to worship their divine Master, but this was their peculiar characteristic. They were such as ‘called upon

\* 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

† Rev. i. 17.

‡ Acts vii. 55---60.

|| Rev. v. 8---14.

§ John v. 23, 23.

‘ the name of the Lord Jesus \*;’ and *Pliny*, describing them to the emperor Trajan, says, they met on a certain stated day, before it was light, and ‘ sung hymns to Christ as to ‘ a God †.’ Justin Martyr declares, ‘ The true ‘ God, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, ‘ we worship and adore ‡.’ Mr. R. Robinson says, ‘ However the ancients described the ‘ nature of Jesus Christ in their creeds, ‘ *worship him they certainly did* || .’

9. The great mass of simple and pious christians, of learned and useful ministers, in all ages (our opponents themselves being judges), have been worshippers of Jesus Christ, and many of them have even quitted the world happily and triumphantly in calling upon his name.

10. And lastly, I will add, that the contrary supposition, that Christ ought not to be worshipped, charges the whole christian church with idolatry, and makes void the promise of the Spirit to lead believers into all truth.

\* Acts ix. 14. 21. Rom. x. 9. 13.

† Pliny’s Epistles, b. x. epist. 97.

‡ 2d. Apology.

|| Plea for Christ’s Divinity, p. 46.

After the above proofs, I confess myself at a loss to know what reason you can have for asserting, that ‘ the holy and humble Jesus ‘ would *doubtless have rejected with abhorrence* those divine honours, which his mistaken followers in latter ages have ascribed to him, had they been addressed to him previous to his departure from the ‘ world\*.’ One thing, however, strikes me very forcibly ; namely, that it is impossible to reconcile the conduct of Jesus, in receiving divine honours, with his ‘ holy and ‘ humble’ character, upon the supposition of his being a man only like ourselves. When the heathen mistook Paul and Barnabas for deities, with what earnestness did they restrain them from idolatry ? when John prostrated himself before the angel that appeared to him, he immediately forbade him : ‘ See ‘ thou do it not, for I am thy fellow-servant.’ But Jesus, as we have seen, did not reprove his worshippers, but commended them. And when we hear him call himself the Son of God—declare God to be in a peculiar sense his Father, and himself one with him ;—that he doth the same works, and is

\* Review, p. 168.



entitled to the same honours with the Father ; it is impossible to believe, but that he must truly be a divine person, or a vain-glorious impostor. So essential is the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, even to the vindication of his moral character ! Before, therefore, you, Sir, oppose farther this important truth, it might be well to consider, whether you do not thereby virtually give up christianity itself.

I remain yours, &c.

## LETTER XII.

*Terms of Acceptance with God.*

REV. SIR,

I Perfectly agree with you, that ‘ there is  
 ‘ nothing in the whole compass of religion  
 ‘ and morals, of greater importance to be  
 ‘ distinctly known than the terms of accept-  
 ‘ ance with God ; or in other words, the  
 ‘ means which God has appointed for the  
 ‘ attainment of our ultimate happiness.  
 ‘ And these are so explicitly revealed in the  
 ‘ scriptures both of the Old and New Tes-  
 ‘ tament, that no person of common under-  
 ‘ standing, who reads them attentively, and  
 ‘ without prejudice, can fall into any mate-  
 ‘ rial error upon this subject \*.’ Thus far  
 we coincide, but when you add, ‘ the prac-  
 ‘ tice of virtue is always represented as the  
 ‘ *only means* of attaining happiness, both here  
 ‘ and hereafter † ;’ we divide immediately.

\* Review 104.

† Ib.

Let

Let me first attend to your arguments, and then propose mine.

You quote several passages which enjoin men ‘ to fear God, to do justly, to ‘ love mercy,’ &c. and then triumphantly add, ‘ These are the *clear* and unequivocal ‘ terms of salvation both under the old dispensation and the new\*.’ But, in order to make your conclusion valid, you know it ought to arise naturally from your premises. It is true enough, and we all admit, that the scriptures enforce the principles of morality and good works; but it does not follow that they make these ‘ the terms ‘ of salvation.’ And I cannot help thinking it a little remarkable, that you should bring so many texts to prove what nobody will dispute, and not one to prove the point at issue, i. e. whether these be the terms of salvation. There is, however, perhaps a better reason for this than for most parts of your work—there are no such texts to be produced: for, whenever ‘ the terms of sal-

\* Review, p. 105. The last sentence is marked with inverted commas, as if a quotation from scripture also; but this, I suppose, to be an error of the press, and not designed.

‘ vation,’

‘ vation,’ as you call them, are named, they appear to be very different, as I shall shew immediately ; only I must here premise, that I use this expression, ‘ terms of salvation,’ not for any meritorious cause, as it has been sometimes taken ; but, as you have explained it, for ‘ the means which God ‘ has appointed for the attainment of our ‘ ultimate happiness.’

Here you anticipate what I should naturally remark, that the apostles ‘ insist much ‘ on faith in Christ,’ and you admit that they do this ‘ with great propriety ;’—but wherefore ? ‘ because their exhortations were ‘ usually addressed to unbelieving Jews, or ‘ to heathen idolaters.’ But you add, ‘ those ‘ who already professed christianity are en- ‘ joined, *not to believe*, but to act consistent- ‘ ly with their profession, and to be “ care- “ ful to maintain good works \*.” If this remark mean only that believers are not called upon to commence anew the life of faith after it is once begun, it may be true ; but it is trifling, and nothing to the purpose : if it mean that the christian has no

\* Review, p. 103.

farther use for faith after he has once believed, it is clearly a great and dangerous mistake; for the inspired writers constantly represent faith as the grand principle of holiness, obedience, and eternal life. ‘ I am crucified with Christ (saith Paul), nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the FAITH of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me \*.’—He prays for the converted Ephesians, that Christ might ‘ dwell in their hearts by *faith* †;’ and he exhorts Timothy to ‘ fight the good fight of *faith* ‡.’ And you know that both Testaments represent the christian life as a life of faith ||; and ascribe to this principle all the virtues and good works of christians. John says expressly, ‘ This is his command, that we [who do those things that are pleasing in his sight] should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ:’ and again, ‘ These things have I written to you that BELIEVE on the name of the Son of God; that ye

\* Gal. ii. 20.

† Eph. iii. 17.

‡ 1 Tim. vi. 12.

|| Heb. x. 38.



‘ may know that ye have eternal life, and  
 ‘ *that ye may believe* on the name of the  
 ‘ Son of God \*.’ So that the apostles ‘ in-  
 ‘ sist much on faith ;’ not only to unbelievers,  
 but to believers more especially, to whom  
 all the Epistles are addressed.

But our inquiry leads directly to the sub-  
 ject of justification, and the grand question  
 is, Whether by works or faith a man is  
 justified? And here, if Paul may be ad-  
 mitted to give the answer, this cannot re-  
 main long undecided ; for upon a full con-  
 sideration of the subject, in his epistle to the  
 Romans, he concludes ‘ That a man is jus-  
 ‘ tified by faith, without the deeds of the  
 ‘ law †.’ He farther shews that this was  
 not peculiar to the new dispensation ; but  
 that Abraham himself was thus justified, as  
 it is written, ‘ Abraham believed God, and  
 ‘ it was imputed unto him for righteous-  
 ‘ ness.’ The like is to be inferred of David,  
 who ‘ describeth the blessedness of the man  
 ‘ unto whom God imputeth righteousness  
 ‘ without works.’

We have been told indeed by some, that  
 the works here intended are ceremonial,

\* I John iii. 23. and v. 13.      † Rom. iii. 28.

and

and not moral, and that this doctrine respects the Jews only. But nothing can be more opposite than this to the whole tenor of the apostle's argument; who proves, in the first instance, that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, are sinners and alike under condemnation. It is equally contrary to his reason, that no flesh might glory before God; since moral righteousness certainly gives more room to boast than that which is merely ceremonial. Besides, if his argument respected the Jews only, why address this subject to the Romans?

James declares, that 'by works a man is justified, and not by faith only,' which, at first sight, seems opposite to Paul's doctrine; but is so only in expression, a little consideration being sufficient to reconcile them: James's design being simply and evidently to shew that the faith by which men are justified must be a living, operative faith—'faith working by love;' because 'faith without works is dead' and useless. In short, we are justified by faith only; but it must be a faith accompanied and evidenced by good works. Both these apostles bring the case of Abraham in illustration of their principles; but

T

then

then it is to be observed they refer to different periods and circumstances. Paul says, that Abraham, in the first instance, was justified by faith, while yet ‘uncircumcised;’ this was his justification in *the sight of God*, and was without any consideration of his works. James refers to a period some years subsequent to this, when, in the offering up his son, he was justified by works also; that is, his faith was shewn to be genuine by its fruits \*. Paul therefore refers to the acceptance of a sinner; James, to the approbation of a saint†.

There is another error against which we must be guarded, namely, that of confounding faith with works, or the maintaining justification by faith itself as a work, operating in a way of merit, (which totally enervates and contradicts the whole tenor of the apostle’s argument;) and faith as a medium by which we are united to Christ, and so become interested in his righteousness. This however is not your mistake: for, though

\* Rom. iii. 28. James ii. 24.

† The word ‘justification’ is used in this sense. Matt. xii. 37. 1 Cor. iv. 4.

you ascribe a sufficient efficacy to moral duties, considered as ‘ the equitable terms of ‘ salvation;’ yet you discover no inclination to magnify the efficacy of faith.

But in what respect are we justified by faith? This perhaps may be better explained by a familiar illustration than by the use of metaphysical definitions and distinctions. I have already observed our Lord makes the brazen serpent a type of himself, and of the Gospel method of salvation. Behold the mystic symbol elevated in the view of all the congregation! The diseased Israelites direct their eyes with hope and confidence toward it, and believing, receive life thereby; but would any from thence conclude that there was a merit in the act of looking, or ascribe the glory of their salvation to themselves on that account? Equally unreasonable would it be to consider faith as a meritorious act, or cause of our salvation.—A judicious writer gives the following apt and familiar illustration of this subject.

‘ It appears (says he) that free grace is ‘ the source of our justification; the righteousness and atonement of Emmanuel the ‘ meritorious cause of it; and that faith is

‘ only the recipient of the blessing : and we  
 ‘ are justified *by his blood*, because by shed-  
 ‘ ding his blood he completed his obedience  
 ‘ as our surety. Justification may therefore  
 ‘ be ascribed either to the source, or to the  
 ‘ meritorious cause, or to the recipient of it ;  
 ‘ even as a drowning person may be said to  
 ‘ be saved, either by the man on the bank  
 ‘ of the river, or by the rope cast out to him,  
 ‘ or by his hand apprehending the rope : ac-  
 ‘ cording to the different ways in which we  
 ‘ speak on the subject \*.’

That the holy exercises of God’s servants  
 have always been acceptable in his sight, is  
 readily admitted. But in what way? They  
 can do nothing towards furnishing a righte-  
 ousness, that shall be adequate to the require-  
 ments of the law. Were they ever so pure,  
 they could not obliterate past transgressions ;  
 and being mixed with sinful imperfection,  
 they can never be pleasing in his sight, who  
 cannot look upon iniquity without abhor-  
 rence ; nor upon the sinner with any fa-  
 vourable acceptance, but thro’ the Media-  
 tor. Thus the scriptures teach us, that spi-

\* Scott’s Essays, No. xi.



ritual sacrifices are no otherwise ‘ acceptable to God,’ than ‘ by Jesus Christ.†’ And prior to this, it is necessary that the offerers themselves should be ‘ accepted in the beloved\*’. It was testified of Enoch that he pleased God: from whence the apostle to the Hebrews infers that he was a believer, inasmuch, as ‘ without faith it is impossible to please God†.’ ‘ It does not consist (says an eminent author), ‘ with the honour of the Majesty of the King of heaven and earth, to accept of any thing from a condemned malefactor, condemned by the justice of his own holy law, till that condemnation be removed‡.’—‘ The Lord had respect unto Abel . . . and to his offering.’ The scriptures furnish no examples of acceptable obedience from persons in a state of unbelief.

The way in which the scriptures represent us as justified or accepted of God, is constantly opposed to our own works or virtues. It is by something *reckoned, counted, or imputed* to us *for righteousness*, as opposed to a righteousness which is properly our own. If

\* 1 Pet. ii. 5. Eph. i. 6. † Heb. xi. 6.

‡ Prof. Edwards’s Sermon on Justification, p. 33.

our own virtue were the ground of our acceptance, that must be our righteousness: but if so, there could be no room for *reckoning* or *accounting for righteousness*. We should not say of the children of Abraham, their circumcision is *counted* for circumcision: but if the Gentiles keep the law, ‘their uncircumcision is counted for circumcision.’ It is manifest that the term *count*, in this connexion, denotes a reckoning of something to a person, which does not properly belong to him. And when the apostle says, ‘To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness\*’; it is equally evident, that something is reckoned as belonging to the believer which does not properly belong to him. In other words, out of regard to *his* obedience in whom he believes, he is dealt with as though he were possessed of a righteousness adequate to the requirements of the law; though, in fact, he is not so, but stands condemned by it as ungodly. Thus Paul writing to Philemon, says, ‘If he (Onesimus) hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that on mine

\* Rom. iv. 5.

‘account,

\* account \*, (i. e. impute or reckon it to me †)—‘ I will repay it.’ Here the writer evidently means to place himself in the debtor, or offender’s place, not as having incurred the debt ; but as being willing to become answerable for it.

In the Mosaic law we have had occasion to observe the doctrine of *imputation* as it respected the Jewish sacrifices. When the person who brought the sacrifice had confessed his sins over the bullock, or the goat, they became imputed to it, and the animal suffered the penalty which the sinner had deserved. There is a very strong illustration of this in the institution of the free-will peace offerings, in which it was ordained, that if any of the flesh was eaten on the third day, contrary to the law, the sacrifice should not be accepted, neither *imputed* unto him that offered it ; but the offerer should bear his iniquity, as if he had not offered ‡. From this we clearly ascertain, as indeed I have already proved, that the sacrifice was to bear the iniquity of the offerer, and to be imputed to his account ; but when the sacri-

\* Philemon, 18, 19. Τὸ ἐμὸν ἐλλογέι.

‡ Lev. vii. 18.

fice was not offered according to the law; then the sinner bare his own iniquity—the atonement was not imputed or reckoned to him.

Nor is God's so dealing with Christ, or us in him, a capricious, though it be an extraordinary, proceeding. Imputation is accompanied with relation; such a relation as constitutes a fitness in the transfer, and renders its design sufficiently apparent. In the sufferings of the Saviour we may read the divine displeasure against the transgression of the sinner; and in the justification of the sinner the divine approbation of the obedience of the Saviour. Without relation, and a relation sufficiently manifest, imputation would not answer the end designed; but ' God ' sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,' our *sin* is publicly *condemned* in his sufferings; and his righteousness rewarded in our salvation \*.

Whatever is the ground of our acceptance with God, that is it which we ought to plead in our addresses to him. If Christ's obedience and sufferings have nothing to do

\* Rom. viii. 3. Isa. liii. 10---12. See also Heb. ii. 15---17.

in that important affair, it cannot be expected that we should be told to approach the Father in his name, or to ask any blessing out of respect to his mediation. The only name which we can use with propriety in this case is our own. You seem to be fully prepared, Sir, for this consequence; and make no scruple to affirm, that ‘ we are  
 ‘ never exhorted to ask any thing of God for  
 ‘ the sake of Christ; nor is any blessing ever  
 ‘ said to be granted to us upon that consi-  
 ‘ deration \*.’

One might almost be tempted to think, Sir, that you wrote with a view to stun and confound your readers; or that you had forgotten that you live in a country where every person has access to the scriptures.  
 ‘ Never exhorted to ask any thing for the sake  
 ‘ of Christ; nor is any blessing ever said to be  
 ‘ granted to us upon that consideration!’  
 Plain Christian! who conversest daily with the scriptures, (not to model them to a system; but to learn the will of God, and do it;) How readeſt thou? How haſt thou read the Epistle to the Ephesians, with the Gospel

\* Review, p. 112.



and Epistles of John? ‘ Be ye kind one to  
 ‘ another, tender hearted, forgiving one a-  
 ‘ nother, as God, FOR CHRIST’S SAKE,  
 ‘ hath forgiven you \*.—Your sins are for-  
 ‘ given you for his NAME’S SAKE.—Blessed  
 ‘ be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus  
 ‘ Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiri-  
 ‘ tual blessings in heavenly places *in Christ*.  
 ‘ —*In his name* shall the Gentiles trust.—  
 ‘ Believing we have life through his *name*.—  
 ‘ Whosoever believeth in him shall receive  
 ‘ remission of sins.—Neither is there sal-  
 ‘ vation in any other name under heaven,  
 ‘ given among men, &c †.’

The expression of granting blessings

\* Eph. i. 3. Mr. Belsham, after Dr. Priestley, ob-  
 serves, that this text should be rendered ‘ even as God  
 ‘ *in* (or by) Christ (*ἐν Χριστῷ*) has freely forgiven you.’  
 Thus, indeed, the text literally runs; but that God *in*  
 Christ means no more than ‘ *in* the gospel of Christ,’  
 as Dr. P. says—or, that God ‘ has declared *by* Christ  
 the forgiveness of sins,’ requires more evidence than  
 bare assertions. The expression of Paul appears to  
 me clearly parrallel to that of John; and the pardon  
 of sin (*ἐν*) *in* Christ, is evidently the same as (*διὰ*) *by*,  
 or through his name; or as our translators in one  
 place express it, ‘ for his name’s sake.’

† 1 John ii, 12. Eph. i. 3. Matt. xii. 21. John  
 xx. 31. Acts x. 43. iv. 12.

*in Christ's name* is too clear and familiar, (one would think) to admit dispute or doubt\*. When Jehovah, under the Old

\* Dr. *Priestley*, indeed, tells us (*Familiar Illustrations*, p. 55.) that, ‘ *in the name of Christ*,’ means *as*, or ‘ *in the place of Christ*.---Thus our Lord says, ‘ many shall come in my name, that is, pretending ‘ to be what I am, the Messiah; and again, the ‘ Comforter, whom the Father shall send in my ‘ name, that is, *in my place*.---Praying, therefore, ‘ *in the name of Christ*, *may* mean---with the temper ‘ and disposition of Christ.---So also, being justified ‘ *in the name of Christ*, *may* signify our being justified ‘ ---in consequence of our having the same mind that ‘ was also in Christ.’ So it may among rational divines, who can make any thing signify any thing, or nothing, as they please; but let us compare a few of the texts with this interpretation, and with each other. If in Christ’s name, be in the texts I have cited, in Christ’s stead, then the meaning is---Ask the Father ‘ *in my place*, pretending to be what I ‘ am, the Messiah.’ Or if it mean, ‘ with the temper and disposition of Christ,’ then it is---Ask the Father ‘ *in my temper and disposition*---Hitherto ye ‘ have asked nothing *in my temper and disposition*! Your ‘ sins are forgiven you for Christ’s temper and disposition.’—So, by parity of interpretation, when under the Old Testament dispensation, Jehovah promises to forgive or bless ‘ *for his name’s sake*,’ ‘ it means, ‘ *in*, or *with*, his own temper and disposition.’---So much for ‘ *Familiar Illustrations*!’

Testament promised various blessings for his *own* name's sake, did not this mean, on *his own account*, without any reference to their merits? and was not this the same as for his own glory, for the honour of his divine perfections\*? When under the new dispensation he promises blessings in his *Son's name*, does it not certainly mean, on his *Son's account*, for his sake? What then can be clearer than this promise, 'Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, he will give you †?'—Once more, when our blessed Lord requires children and disciples to be received *in his name*—houses and friends, &c. to be forsaken, and sufferings to be endured for his name's sake, is not the same idea to be preserved ‡?

If it be alleged, that though blessings were allowed to be bestowed for Christ's sake, the same is true also of some other eminent characters. Many blessings were bestowed on Israel, for the sake of Abraham and the fathers; and even on other nations who descended from eminently pious ances-

\* See Isa. xlviii. 9—11. Ezek. xxxvi. 21---23.

† John xvi. 23--26. See also chap. xiv. 13, 14. xv. 16.

‡ Mark ix. 37: Matt. xix. 29. Luke xxi. 12.

tors. To this I reply, if no sacrifice, or service, be acceptable to God but thro' Jesus Christ, Abraham himself must have been accepted, and his faith rewarded on account of him in whom he believed. There is, moreover, an important distinction to be made; for though the Jews received, as we have admitted, many benefits on Abraham's account, yet they are never said to be justified in *his* name; much less to have *redemption through* any thing which he did or suffered on their account.

Instead of this fact, however, making against the doctrine in question, it makes for it. For it is clear from hence, that it is not accounted an improper, or unsuitable thing in the divine administration, to confer favours on individuals, and even nations, *out of respect to the piety of another to whom they stood related*. But if this principle be admitted, the salvation of sinners, out of respect to the obedience and sufferings of Christ, cannot be objected to as unreasonable. To this may be added, that every degree of divine respect to the obedience of the patriarchs; was in fact no other than respect to the obedience of Christ, in whom they believed,

and

and through whom their obedience, like ours, became acceptable. The light of the moon, which is derived from its looking (as it were) on the face of the sun, is no other than the light of the sun itself reflected. But if it be becoming the wisdom of God to reward the righteousness of his servants, and that many ages after their decease, so highly (which was only borrowed lustre) much more may he reward the righteousness of his Son from whence it originated, in the eternal salvation of those that believe in him.

From these texts I would now adduce a few pertinent observations.

1. That the doctrine of *imputed* sin and righteousness implies no fallacy or mistake on the part of God. He sees all things as they are, and cannot be deceived. He does not consider us as having *personally* eaten the forbidden fruit ; nor as having personally offered an atonement.

2. That God does not impute sin or righteousness without a foundation for it in the nature of things. If Adam's sin be imputed to us, it is on account of our relation to him, as his children and posterity ; branches  
from



from the same stock, suckers from the same root. Indeed this doctrine is so closely connected with that of human depravity, that it appears to me they must stand or fall together. Without admitting Adam to have been a federal head to his posterity, I cannot account for the latter; and admitting this, it seems necessarily to follow from that relation, that we must be involved in his guilt and punishment.—It is in like manner we account for the imputation of Christ's atonement. According to our hypothesis, Christ became our federal head and voluntary substitute. In that character he suffered as our sacrifice and substitute: 'the Lord caused to meet upon him the iniquities of us all.'—In consequence he made atonement for the transgressors, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, whereby 'the many' (for whom he suffered) shall be justified.

3. From all these instances in which the sin and righteousness is imputed, the expression evidently means that the party is considered as guilty or innocent on their account, and consequently condemned or justified.

4. The

4. The most accurate idea of the doctrine of imputed righteousness is perhaps to be drawn from the Jewish sacrifices, wherein, as above shewn, the guilt of the offerer was imputed to the sacrifices, and the atonement made imputed to the offerer: and from this it appears to me, that the Old Testament believers formed their ideas of imputation: and from thence such of the New Testament believers as were Jews, naturally derived theirs.

As to the technical terms sometimes employed by divines on this subject, I am not concerned to justify what I have not used; and I have endeavoured to conform as closely as possible to the language, as well as doctrine of scripture; but I must confess, the complaint sometimes urged against Calvinists for their theological terms comes with a very ill grace from Socinian writers, who, on this, and several other subjects, use language entirely of their own—or rather borrow that of pagan philosophers and moralists.

Should you, Sir, after all the evidence adduced, tell me that the language of scripture is so highly figurative as to warrant none of my doctrinal conclusions, I should

feel

feel myself reduced to the same situation as if I were disputing with an enthusiast or a mystic, who, by the arbitrary affixion of new ideas to the words of the inspired writers, gets as completely rid of their force as you do by taking all the established ideas from them. You might as well tell me the whole of religion is a fable, and that we are lost or saved only metaphorically.

Your's, &c.

## LETTER XIII.

*Of the Doctrine of Divine Influences, and  
Experimental Religion.*

MR. WILBERFORCE \* had stated that  
‘ the doctrine of the sanctifying opera-  
‘ tions of the Holy Spirit appears to have  
‘ met with still worse treatment than that  
‘ of love to Christ.’

Upon this you think proper to observe,  
that Mr. W. himself ‘ appears to be under  
‘ a considerable error upon this subject, for  
‘ want of sufficient attention to the *true*  
‘ *sense* of the scripture language.’—You pro-  
ceed: ‘ It is evident to every person com-  
‘ petently acquainted with sacred phraseolo-  
‘ gy, that the *Spirit of God* sometimes fig-  
‘ nifies *God himself*; and sometimes divine  
‘ *inspiration*†.’ So far may be granted.

You add, ‘ The *Holy Spirit* usually means  
‘ the *miraculous* powers communicated to

\* View, p. 71.

† Review, p. 76.

‘ the

‘ the apostles, by which the christian reli-  
 ‘ gion was confirmed at its first promulgati-  
 ‘ on; and Jews and heathens having been  
 ‘ converted by this impressiv evidence, they  
 ‘ are said to be regenerated, renewed, or  
 ‘ sanctified by the Holy Spirit; that is, re-  
 ‘ covered from a state of heathenism or Pha-  
 ‘ risaism, which is, in scripture language,  
 ‘ a state of alienation from God, and en-  
 ‘ mity to him, into a state of *visible* profes-  
 ‘ sion and of privilege. Mr. W. and many  
 ‘ others, understand that in a *moral* sense,  
 ‘ which the writers intend in a *ceremonial*;  
 ‘ and apply expressions indiscriminately to  
 ‘ all persons, which the connexion and  
 ‘ scope of the passage limits to the first con-  
 ‘ verts from Judaism and heathenism†.’

That either you or Mr. W. must have greatly mistaken the meaning of the sacred phraseology is indeed certain; in examining where the mistake lies, I beg leave to suggest the following observations.

The whole evidence of your assertions rests upon your own authority; for, notwithstanding you here oppose M. W. on scrip-

\* Review, p. 77, comp. p. 16, 17.



tural ground, you have brought no texts to support your assertions: and I am persuaded you are too much a friend to free enquiry to wish your word to be taken, although at the same time it may be unpleasant to seek for proofs where none are to be found.

So far as I have been able to understand the scriptures, after considerable attention to this subject, proofs numerous and irrefragible lie directly against you. Having cited them at length elsewhere\*; I shall here only glance at them.

In general, it appears to me, that good men in all ages, from the patriarchal to the present, have believed in the doctrine of divine influences, and ascribed their religious feelings to this source. Now, in a point of personal experience as this is, where patriarchs and prophets, sages and philosophers, apostles, martyrs and reformers, all agree, their testimony appears to me decisive; and must, I should think, have considerable weight even with yourself.

Not, however, to rest in generals, our Lord himself strongly and repeatedly incul-

\* Historic Defence of Experimental Religion.  
2 vols. 12mo. 1795.

cates this truth, as one of the first and most important in the christian system; and that he chiefly refers not to the miraculous, but moral influences of the Spirit, is evident in his conversation with Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria; in his exhortation to his disciples to pray for the Holy Spirit, and in his assurance, that his heavenly Father would grant this divine blessing to all who ask it.

It were endless to quote all the passages from the apostolic writings which confirm this important doctrine: and to refer all these to miraculous powers, would be not only concluding without evidence, but against it; because it appears, that miraculous powers were no evidence of a state of grace or acceptance with God, since hypocrites and bad men, as Judas, and other ‘workers of iniquity\*’ possessed them: and, on the other hand, I suppose you will hardly contend that the gift of miracles was essential to practical christianity; yet this certainly is the case as to the Holy Spirit; for, ‘if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his†.’

\* Matt. vii. 22, 23.

† Rom. viii. 9. See also John iii. 5—8. vi. 44—46. xii. 32, 39, 40.

Again,

Again, It is far from certain that the Jews and heathens who were converted, were converted *generally* by the ‘impressive evidence of miracles.’ Certainly many saw them, who were not converted, and many were converted without (as far as we know) such evidences. Yea, some were reprovèd for insisting on the evidence of miracles;\* and a blessing is pronounced on those ‘who have ‘not seen, and have yet believed.†’ In fact, the ministry of the gospel was the great instrument of conversion in the first ages, as in all succeeding ones; and our own eyes have witnessed the like effects, although the gift of miracles hath long since ceased. Indeed, our Lord himself has taught us that little is to be expected from the force of miracles where the scriptures are not believed. ‘If ‘they believe not Moses and the Prophets, ‘neither will they be persuaded though one ‘should arise from the dead.’

Scriptural conversion is not a mere recovery from heathenism, or pharisaism to ‘a ‘state of visible profession, and of privilege;’ but, in many instances, a conversion from a

\* Matt. xii. 39.      † John xx. 29.

*mere* visible profession, which is common to hypocrites and bad men, to a state of vital union and communion with God. Thus our Lord taught his disciples, who were neither heathens nor pharisees, the necessity of their being converted and becoming little children, in order to their admission into his kingdom\*; and this conversion is uniformly ascribed to the grace of God.

I am aware that it has been said, this phrase, ‘ the GRACE of God,’ in scripture never intends divine *influences* ; but only the divine *favor*. That it often bears the latter sense, is freely admitted; but that in many instances it also intends the former, is equally certain. See, for example, the following passages: ‘ By the GRACE of God I am  
 ‘ what I am: and his GRACE which was  
 ‘ bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I  
 ‘ laboured more abundantly than they all:  
 ‘ yet not I, but the GRACE of God which  
 ‘ was with me.’—‘ By the GRACE of God  
 ‘ we have had our conversation in the world,  
 ‘ and more abundantly to you-ward.’—‘ We  
 ‘ do you to wit of the GRACE of God be-

\* Matt. xviii. 3.

‘ flowed on the churches of Macedonia.’—  
 ‘ We desired Titus, that as he had begun,  
 ‘ so he would also finish in you the same  
 ‘ GRACE also, &c.’—‘ My GRACE is suf-  
 ‘ ficient for thee.’—‘ Grow in GRACE, &c.\*’

I do not comprehend what passages you particularly refer to, when you charge Mr. W. and others, with taking those scriptures in ‘ a *moral* sense which the writers intend ‘ in a ceremonial.’ Are we to go back then to the carnal ordinances of the Jewish ritual? Or is christianity to be resolved into a system of religious ceremonies?—As to what you say, of our applying to all indiscriminately what the contexts of the passages limit to a few, we plead generally, *not guilty*; but the instances must be pointed out before we can answer them particularly.

But you will perhaps still plead, that all such divine influences are *unnecessary*. ‘ It has  
 ‘ never yet been proved, you say, that any  
 ‘ supernatural influence upon the mind is  
 ‘ *necessary* under the divine government; or  
 ‘ that it has ever existed, except in a few

\* 1 Cor. xv. 10. 2 Cor. i. 12. viii. 1, 6, 7.—xii. 9.  
 2 Pet. iii. 18 See also Eph. iv. 29. Heb. iv. 16.



‘ very extraordinary cases.’ If the evidence of scripture might be admitted on the question, this would not be a task of any difficulty. Our Lord has taught the necessity of being born again—of being born of the Spirit; ‘ for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit \*.’ Which words are evidently synonymous with those of the great apostle of the Gentiles—‘ They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, and they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded,’ or to mind the things of the flesh ‘ is death; but to be spiritually minded;’ or to mind the things of the Spirit ‘ is life and peace.’ For the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are in the flesh CANNOT PLEASE GOD. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.†’—Again, ‘ The natural man receiveth not the things

\* John iii. 6.

† Rom. viii. 5—9.

‘ of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned\*.’

If this be true, Sir, I can expect the scriptures, (clear and decisive as they appear to me,) will have little authority with ‘ philosophic theists,’ among whom you evidently rank yourself: for you subjoin immediately, ‘ Every philosophic theist will allow that all events are brought to pass agreeably to the divine foreknowledge, and according to the wise and benevolent counsels of God. Also, that a divine energy is actually exerted in every event, according to certain rules which God has prescribed to himself, few will deny. True philosophy, and true religion, lead us to see God in every thing. But that he *ever*, much more that he *frequently* deviates from his usual course to produce effects upon the human mind, which would not have resulted from the natural operation of general laws, is a fact improbable in itself, and of which we have no satisfactory evidence, either from experience or revelation\*.’ From this paragraph, I

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.

† Review, p. 78.

fear, Sir, we have been mistaken in considering your system as a sort of *half-way house* between christianity and infidelity ; for it seems to bear hard even on the confines of the latter. Nay, some ‘few’ of these philosophers, it appears, are *virtually* atheists, for they deny the exertion of ‘a divine energy’ in providence ; and for the rest, though they admit this, according to the established laws of nature, yet that God *ever* deviates therefrom, appears to them, as it does to you, ‘a fact improbable in itself, and of ‘which we have no satisfactory evidence.’

This, Sir, may be philosophical *theism*, but I hope you will not call it christianity. For if all supernatural influence on the human mind be *improbable*, and without evidence, we have no room for a divine revelation ; and consequently, none for christianity.

It is therefore a very awkward salvo which you offer for the christian writers, and a very strange attempt to bend their evidence against themselves in the paragraph which follows. In *popular* language, you remark, ‘The virtuous affections of virtuous men, are with great propriety ascribed to God ;

‘ and the pious writers of the scriptures hav  
 ‘ often adopted this form of expreffion.  
 ‘ Whether they themselves believed in the  
 ‘ exiftence of frequent fupernatural opera-  
 ‘ tions upon the mind does not clearly ap-  
 ‘ pear ; and it is certain, that they no where  
 ‘ affirm that it constituted any part of their  
 ‘ commiffion, to teach this extraordinary  
 ‘ and *improbable* doctrine \*.’ So then, after  
 all, it is in vain that I have quoted thefe  
 authorities—the fcripture writers were only  
*popular* writers at the beft ; it is uncertain  
 whether they believed what they taught—  
 it is certain, we have no evidence that they  
 were empowered to preach this doctrine,  
 therefore, to fpeak in the mildeft terms, in  
 teaching it they muft have exceeded their  
 commiffion !!!

But the ‘ Agency which they admitted,’  
 you fay, ‘ extends to evil as well as to  
 ‘ good ; “ it hardens the heart of Pharoah,”  
 ‘ as well as “ opens that of Lydia ;” and  
 ‘ therefore, it is a general, and not a parti-  
 ‘ cular influence ; confequently the popular  
 ‘ language of the f acred writings by no

\* Review, p. 78, 79.

‘ means

‘ means authorises the conclusion, that God  
 ‘ ever interposes supernaturally to produce  
 ‘ moral effects upon the mind.\*’ How re-  
 iterated, Sir, are your attempts to reduce  
 christianity to a level with paganism ! but  
 here you go below it ; for, though they  
 ascribed the virtuous actions of good men  
 to the Deity, I believe they knew better  
 than to ascribe the vicious actions of bad  
 men to the same source. This is to make  
 the same fountain send forth both sweet  
 water and bitter. It is true, that the Lord  
 hardened Pharoah’s heart ; but it is never  
 said that he did this by his Spirit, by his  
 grace, or by any positive agency. No, it  
 was merely in the course of providence—by  
 permitting his magicians to perform those  
 wonders which strengthened his infidelity,  
 while others probably pressed him with  
 motives of a political consideration. In this  
 sense only does the Lord harden men’s  
 hearts ; and that, not till they have, as in  
 the present instance, repeatedly hardened  
 themselves against him. He sealeth down  
 the eye that shutteth itself against the light.

\* Review, p. 79.

But



But it is otherwise with respect to good. God is light: and like his fairest material representative, the sun, causes darkness only by his absence; but they are his *beams* which create the day.

But after all, your grand objection against this doctrine is, that it is ‘unphilosophical.\*’ On the modern system of materialism, there may be force in this objection; for, if we have no immaterial spirits, certainly they cannot be the subjects of the Spirit’s influence. Still, I should suppose, that human nature, of whatever it consist, may be exposed to foreign influence; and if so, especially to that of the Creator.—The hypothesis of an immaterial and immortal spirit, I grant, harmonizes better with this, as well as with the other doctrines of revelation: and there can be no difficulty in conceiving of the supreme Spirit as having access to all created intelligences.

This doctrine, though a prominent and essential feature in christianity, is by no means peculiar to it; but has been usually considered as equally essential to what is

\* Review, 193.

called *natural religion* ; and so far from being thought unphilosophical, until within these few years, it will be difficult to find a philosopher of any eminence who totally rejected it. Even in the present century, Boyle, Locke, Clarke, Addison, &c. have been among its illustrious advocates.

Nor can I see any thing in it unworthy of philosophy, or inconsistent with reason. Is it absurd to suppose the Supreme Being has an access to the human mind ? Or that he influences the mind to piety and virtue ? Is it irrational to believe this influence operates upon the understanding, in giving a clearer view of divine truth ? Or upon the affections, enkindling love to God and holiness, and exciting hatred and aversion to immorality ?—But it has been ridiculed : so has every thing sacred. ‘ It is liable to great abuse, and has been productive of very pernicious consequences \*.’ So has the doctrine of inspiration itself, and almost every doctrine of religion, natural and revealed.

Neither is there any ground for pretend-

\* Review, p. 79.

ing that this doctrine introduces confusion in the divine government, or perpetuates the age of miracles ; because the Spirit of God operates as much according to his established laws in the moral world as in the natural ; though both may often be inscrutable to us. ‘ The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit \*.’

It is, however, simply upon the authority of scripture that this doctrine must be supported ; and whatever you might do with the philosophers, you would find it impossible to deprive us of the sanction of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, and especially that of Jesus Christ himself, to whose divine instruction and compassion I cordially commend you, remaining,

Yours, &c.

\* John iii. 8.

## LETTER XIV.

*Effects and Consequences of the Calvinistic System.*

REV. SIR,

HAVING thus far attended to the evidences of divine truth, we must not conclude these Letters without some attention to its effects and consequences, especially as you lay particular stress on this argument. ‘It is from the absurd and injurious consequences which result from Mr. Wilberforce’s principles that’ you ‘infer their falsehood and impiety;’ and you very justly observe, that ‘the natural and necessary consequences of principles are the same, whether the advocates of such principles are apprised of them or not, and whether they do or do not chuse to contemplate and avow them\*.’

Of all consequences, those of a practical

\* Review, p. 11.

nature are the most important, and it is a very serious consideration indeed, if the practical consequences or tendencies of Calvinism be as you represent them; ‘so odious and ‘disgusting\*,’ that it should seem, the only thing which preserves Calvinists from being altogether monsters is, that they are inattentive to their own principles, and blind to their most necessary consequences. ‘The ‘truth is,’ you say ‘that Mr. Wilberforce, ‘and others, who agree with him, seldom ‘regard their system in a comprehensive ‘view, or pursue their principles to their ‘just and necessary consequences. Satisfied with being themselves in the number ‘of the elect and regenerate, they see no ‘cause to complain on their own account, ‘and giving themselves up to joy and gratitude for their personal interest in the promises of the gospel, they *feel little concern ‘for the non-elect mass of mankind, doomed ‘by the necessity of their circumstances, to ‘eternal misery; and seldom allow themselves to enquire how far such a state of ‘things is reconcilable to wisdom, benevolence, or justice †.*

\* Review, p. 10.

† Ibid. p. 11.



Not to notice the misrepresentation here given of the Calvinistic system, the first remark I would offer on this passage will respect the compliment you have paid to the intelligence and penetration of the Calvinists—who are, it seems, men of such narrow minds and contracted views, that ‘they seldom regard their system in a comprehensive view—seldom allow themselves to enquire how far such a state of things is reconcilable to wisdom, benevolence, or justice.’—If this remark be intended to apply only to the mass of professing Calvinists; it may, we presume, be equally applied to the majority of Unitarians; for there are in *every* sect few, comparatively, capable of taking a comprehensive view of their own principles. But if it be intended to apply to Calvinists universally, and exclusively, it may be considered as a specimen of Unitarian candour and liberality, of which many similar instances are not wanting in the work before us.

A second natural and necessary effect of Calvinistic principles is, it should appear, that they so absorb men in their own interest, as to render them insensible to the

state of others. ‘ Satisfied with being themselves in the number of the elect and regenerate . . . . they feel little concern for the non-elect mass of mankind.’ Assertions are easy, and when delivered with confidence, we have often seen them obtain credit, even though totally unsupported with evidence. But in the present instance, facts run so directly and notoriously contrary to this statement, that I cannot but wonder even that you, Sir, have ventured to risk it; especially if you have, as from some circumstances I should suppose, looked into Mr. Fuller’s Letters on the comparative tendency of ‘ The Calvinistic and Socinian Systems\*.’ It is true, Calvinists do not seek the salvation of the non-elect *as such*; but as non-election is utterly unknown to them, it has no influence in retarding the progress of their labours. It is towards men as sinners that their efforts are directed. Not to enter at large upon this topic, suffice it to say, Pres. *Edwards* was a Calvinist, and great and wearied were his exertions for the souls of men—*David Brainard* was a Cal-

\* Letter III,

vinist, and he devoted his life for the salvation of a few barbarous heathens—*Whitefield* was a Calvinist, and he flew backward and forward from kingdom to kingdom, and from clime to clime, like ‘an angel through the midst of heaven,’ to preach the everlasting gospel. Thousands more might be enumerated to prove, if necessary, that Calvinism does not render, even the most zealous of its professors, indifferent to the salvation of the mass of mankind. Let Mr. B. produce only *one solitary instance* of like zeal and compassion among the whole body of intelligent and benevolent Unitarians; and then it may be time enough to reproach the Calvinists with their want of zeal and tenderness to the souls of men.

Lest I should be accused of misrepresentation it must be confessed, that all this selfishness and indifference to others is supposed to arise from an excess of virtue, namely, of *gratitude* on our own account. Like a condemned criminal who has received a pardon from his sovereign, the Calvinist so gives up himself ‘to joy and gratitude’ on his own account as ‘seldom to allow himself’ to ar-  
raign

raign the conduct of his judge, either as it respects himself or his fellow-prisoners. But then, lest we should be vain of this virtue, you take care in your subsequent pages, to represent even this gratitude as no better than fulsome adulation to the Son of God, and gross idolatry.

3. You represent us farther as enemies to reason, rational interpretation, and sound criticism. ‘ Popular writers testify their regard for the scriptures by asserting or assuming their plenary inspiration—by calling them indiscriminately the word of God ; by quoting text upon text, without regard to connexion, without proper explanation, without any allowance for figurative language, or Jewish phraseology ; and without any attempt to ascertain the genuineness of disputed passages ; citing detached sentences as inspired apophthegms ; relying with full confidence on the received text, as though the authority of its editors were equal to that of the apostles, and apparently ignorant of all that has been accomplished by the indefatigable industry, and penetrating sagacity of modern critics, to  
‘ correct

‘ correct the text and to bring it nearer to the  
 ‘ original standard ; equally confiding in the  
 ‘ authority of the English translation ; and annexing, without hesitation or enquiry, those  
 ‘ senses to disputed phrases which have been  
 ‘ learned from obsolete articles and creeds\*.’

It would be tedious and uninteresting to analyse this loose declamatory charge, but there is one thing insinuated that especially merits animadversion ; namely, that rational criticism is inimical to the orthodox system, which is here supposed to rest upon corrupt editions and versions of the scripture ; or why complain of our placing implicit confidence on editors and translators ? But if this were true, it must be supposed that those who have paid the most particular attention to these studies, would necessarily prove Unitarians or Socinians ; whereas, how contrary this is to the evidence of facts is sufficiently evident from the instances of Ken-  
 nicott and Lowth, of Doddridge and of Gill, and many other critics indefatigable in their enquiries ; but instead of quoting these,

\* Review, p. 27.

I shall



I shall offer a single extract from a foreign Professor, whose name ranks in the highest class of scripture critics ; I mean the great Michaelis, who, speaking of the labours of modern critics, says, ‘ It is true, that the  
‘ number of proof passages in support of cer-  
‘ tain doctrines, has been diminished by our  
‘ knowledge of the various readings. We  
‘ are certain, for instance, that 1 John v. 7.  
‘ is a spurious passage ; but the doctrine con-  
‘ tained in it is not therefore changed, since  
‘ it is delivered in other parts of the New  
‘ Testament. After the most diligent enqui-  
‘ ry, especially by those who would banish  
‘ the divinity of Christ from the articles of  
‘ our religion, not a *single various reading*  
‘ has been discovered in the two principal  
‘ passages, John i. 1. and Rom. ix. 5. ; and  
‘ this very doctrine, instead of being shaken  
‘ by the collections of Mill and Wetstein,  
‘ has been rendered more certain than ever.  
‘ This is so strongly felt by the modern re-  
‘ formers in Germany, that they begin to  
‘ think less favourably of that species of cri-  
‘ ticism which they at first so highly re-  
‘ commended, in hopes of its leading to dis-  
coveries

‘coveries more suitable to their maxims,  
‘than the ancient system \*.’

As to the general declamation, it will weigh light with candid critical enquirers; if the texts above produced are quoted only in a detached, popular, or erroneous sense, have the goodness not only to say, but to prove it; at least, produce some plausible arguments in favour of your novel interpretations; for, notwithstanding what you boast of the wisdom and judgment of Unitarians, as ‘rational critics,—men of learning and enquiry,—enlightned and consistent christians,’—I have not found in your Letters one critical examination of scripture; but the whole of your work is a close imitation of

\* Marsh’s Michaelis, vol. i. p. 226. In a note on this passage, Mr. Marsh observes, that the author’s assertions are not perfectly correct: ‘for John i. 1. instead of  $\Theta\epsilon\varsigma$  the Cod. Steph. 7. and Gregory of Nyssa have  $\text{O } \Theta\epsilon\varsigma$ ; on the other hand, Rom. ix. 5. some of the fathers have quoted without  $\Theta\epsilon\varsigma$ .’ These variations, however, are too slight to shake the authority of these texts; nor do I conceive these to be the ‘two principal texts’ upon which this doctrine rests: there are many others, at least equally decisive in its favour.

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that popular style which you so pointedly condemn.

4. The most curious, if not the most criminal part of your charge against us is, that of dishonouring the *scriptures* with our belief and confidence, while the wise men of your hypothesis shew their veneration for them by their suspicions and doubts—querying, altering, or rejecting texts, chapters, and whole books of scripture, as may suit their purpose.

It would be impertinent to descend here to particulars, but there is one passage which I cannot help citing as sufficiently decisive of your attachment to the scriptures. ‘The  
‘ scriptures’ you tell us ‘contain a faithful  
‘ and credible account of the *christian doctrine*,  
‘ which is the *true word of God*: but they  
‘ are not *themselves* the word of God, nor do  
‘ they ever assume that title: and it is highly  
‘ improper to speak of them as such; as it  
‘ leads inattentive readers to suppose they  
‘ were written under a *plenary inspiration*, to  
‘ which they make no pretension; and as  
‘ such expressions expose christianity unnecessarily to the cavils of unbelievers.\*’

\* Review, p. 19.

Here is, first, a distinction which I confess I do not perfectly understand: To say, the scriptures are not the word of God, but only *contain* an account of it, seems to me like saying, an act of Parliament is not the law of the land, but only contains an account of the law of the land; for such parts, at least, of the scripture as contain the christian doctrine are certainly the word of God. But the scriptures, we are told, never ‘assume that title.’ No! let us examine for ourselves, for I much fear the Gentlemen that say this are not, with all their criticism, well acquainted with their Bible. I will cite a few passages from both Testaments, and let the candid reader compare the contexts. When David, addressing Jehovah, says, ‘*Thy word* is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path †;’ did he not refer to the sacred writings of Moses, which he had in the preceding verses called, the *law*, the precepts, the commandments, the testimonies of Jehovah?—‘How sweet are thy words unto my taste!—Through thy precepts I get understanding†.’

\* Ps. cxix. 105.

† Ibid, ver. 97 to 105. See the whole Psalm.

In the New Testament, the scriptures are called ‘ the lively oracles,’ and ‘ the oracles ‘ of God\* ;’ expressions at least equally strong, and there are several passages where the very term ‘ Word of God’ is not only most usually, but most naturally understood as referring to them ; though perhaps the expression may strictly intend, or at least *include* the idea of divine Revelation, whether by the word preached or written.

What you say of the *plenary* inspiration of the scriptures, might afford scope to a more extensive enquiry than I can here institute ; but there is one question which I beg leave to urge upon you with some seriousness—Are the scriptures, particularly those of the New Testament, to be considered as a *certain* and *infallible* guide to *divine truth*, or are they not ? If they are—be so kind as to inform us what books and chapters are to be received as such, and in what edition or translation. For I have observed, that there is no one book or chapter but some or other Unitarian writer has rejected ; one admitting only the gospel of Matthew,

\* AGs vii. 38. Rom. iii. 2 Heb. v. 12. 1 Pet. iv. 11.



and another only that of Luke; and those gentlemen who are liberal enough to admit the four gospels, generally deduct such chapters, and parts of chapters as are most obnoxious to their scheme. As to the Epistolary parts, I believe you generally consider them as the private opinions only of the writers, and of little consequence to us: but if so, those writers must have been guilty of imposition; particularly Peter, who classes the writings of his brother Paul among the *other scriptures*\*. On the other hand, if the scriptures do not contain any *certain* and *infallible* guide to truth, it is of little consequence what they do contain: for if the sacred writers were the subjects of Jewish or heathen prejudices, and if they were liable to errors and misconceptions, your own favourite study of criticism is indeed of little value; and it is of no more importance to ascertain the true reading and accurate Translation of Peter, John, or Paul, than to fix the text and version of any of the Greek or Latin Classics. If we are only to receive such parts of the Bible as *appear to*

\* Eph. vi. 17. Heb. iv. 12. &c. &c.

as probable or just, then is this to make  
 'the word of God' of no effect. To submit  
 the divine oracles to the corrections of rea-  
 son and philosophy is an absurdity equal to  
 any that can be found, even in the creed of  
 popery :—It is to exclude the sunshine, and  
 'rejoice in sparks of our own kindling'—to  
 forsake the fountain of living waters, and to  
 hew out unto ourselves broken cisterns that  
 can hold no water.—A fault and a misery,  
 Sir, from which I pray God to preserve or  
 deliver you, and yours for the

Truth's sake, &c.

## L E T T E R   X V .

*Effects. and Consequences of the Calvinistic  
System continued.*

REV. SIR,

A Single Letter was much too short to consider your various objections under this head. I proceed therefore in the present Letter to observe,

5. Calvinists are represented as superstitious *Sabbatarians*—returning to Judaical customs, and running counter to the express injunctions of Paul—and to the very spirit of christianity, which, you tell us\*, expressly abolishes all distinction of days, and ‘consequently the *Sabbath*.’ On the contrary, it appears to me, that the Sabbath is not a Jewish institution, nor is it censured by the apostle.

That it was not merely a Jewish institution, appears from its appointment immediately on the creation. ‘On the seventh day

\* Review, p. 20.

‘ God ended [or HAD ended\*] his work which he had made : and he rested on the seventh day.’ The Sabbath therefore was a patriarchal institution, and in the book of Genesis, there are some pretty clear intimations of its observation by Abel, by Noah, and by the other patriarchs, from whom it doubtless spread over most ancient nations†.

We observe a Sabbath therefore, not because it was enjoined by Moses, or observed by the Israelites ; but because it was a precept of the Creator from the beginning, and never has been repealed, though the day itself has been changed, (and perhaps more than once) as not belonging to the morality of the institution. I know that it has been pretended, that Moses mentions the Sabbath in this place by way of anticipation, and that it was not observed by the patriarchs.

\* So the best translators render it ; but the Samaritan (probably to avoid the apparent absurdity of God finishing his work on the seventh day) reads, ‘ On the sixth day God ended his work, and he rested on the seventh.’

† See Kennicott’s second Dissertation, p. 130.—Parkhurst’s Lex. in עָבַד. Doddridge’s Lect. prop. cxi.

This

This, however, I consider as an arbitrary unfounded supposition ; because, it is certain that the Israelites observed a Sabbath before the giving of the law at Sinai, for on occasion of the manna being rained from heaven, on the sixth day of the week, Moses thus addressed them, ‘ To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord \*.’

But this question may be drawn into a narrower compass, and fairly be decided by your own suffrage. ‘ Of public worship (you say) I am a sincere advocate ; and it having been the uniform practice of the christian church to assemble for this purpose on the first day of the week, I *highly approve* of the continuance of this *laudable* and *useful* custom. But that under the christian dispensation one day is more holy than another, or that any employment or amusement, which is lawful on other days, is unlawful on the Sunday, can never be proved either from the scriptures, or from ecclesiastical antiquity †.’ As you admit the early assembly of christians on the first day of the week, which it should seem, was

\* Exod. xvi. 23. &c.

† Review, p. 129.



called the *Lord's-day*\*, as peculiarly devoted to his service; permit me to appeal to you, whether Consistency and Common-sense do not require, that a day appointed for public worship should be preserved from secular business and amusement? Or whether any valuable purpose is likely to be answered by the religious instructions mingled with our public worship, if the busy return immediately to their shops, and the gay and idle to their diversions?—You, Sir, are an advocate for the Theatre (with what success we shall enquire presently), but will you plead for the decency, propriety, or consistency, of adjourning thither from the house of God? Or would you have our Sundays close, as did the last Thanksgiving day †—(surely to the scandal of a christian country)—with the Lyar and the Beggar's Opera?

Infinite wisdom has however decided this point, by ordaining, in the first instance, the Sabbath as a day of rest; well knowing the importance of secluding from secular concerns the season devoted to religious worship

\* Rev. i. 10.

† Nov. 29, 1798. At Drury-lane Theatre.

and improvement : at the same time, allowance is made for works of absolute necessity, and the utmost latitude given for acts of benevolence and charity.

As to the authority of Paul, permit me to observe, you have quoted him in exactly the manner for which you have censured Mr. Wilberforce and others ; by exhibiting only detached passages, without examining their tendency or dependence, from an investigation of which, it appears to me, that the apostle had no reference to the question of observing the Christian Sabbath ; for, in both the epistles you refer to, he is evidently speaking of institutions properly Jewish. To the Colossians\*, he says, ‘ Let no man judge  
 ‘ you in meats or in drinks, or in respect of  
 ‘ a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the  
 ‘ Sabbath-days,’ or rather Sabbaths, (for the word *days* is supplementary), all which he declares were typical institutions, and therefore ceased at Christ’s coming, to be obligatory. So in the passage of Romans †, the observing days is ranked with the observing of meats ; both therefore are equally parts of

\* Chap. ii. 16.

† Chap. xiv,

the Mosaic ritual ; whereas, the Christian Sabbath stands upon higher ground, and claims observance as a law given to our first parent, and in him, to all mankind. It is true, that it was afterwards incorporated in the Jewish code ; but there, it occupies the same respectable place as the other precepts confessedly moral, and the observation of the Sabbath is ranked with abstaining from idolatry and profaneness. And this may account for the New Testament not being more particular and express upon the subject. The keeping of *a* sabbath was not a subject of dispute ; nor could it be consistently, where public worship was enjoined. If there were any dispute upon the subject, I should suppose it must relate to the particular day to be observed, which being of little consequence, this ‘ authorised Teacher ‘ permits every man to enjoy his own sentiments.’

But, before we dismiss this subject, permit me to remonstrate a little with you on the tendency of this sentiment, as it respects the present condition of mankind. There are many who will thank you for your notions of morality, in permitting them to go  
from

from places of worship to places of diversion; without impeachment of their christianity; and numbers will admire your plan of mixing diversions with religion; but are you aware what an injury you are offering to the lower classes of mankind? How often has the labourer hailed with blessings the return of this day!—a day which takes the yoke from off his shoulders, and gives a respite to those exertions which, if not intermitted, would soon exceed his strength and overwhelm his spirits: a day which allows him to attend the worship of the Supreme, and implore a blessing on the labour of the other six: a day which permits him to enjoy, and to instruct his family: and which, in fine, enables him with new vigour, and recruited spirits, to recommence the business of the succeeding week.

But you will reply, perhaps the bulk of mankind do not thus enjoy this day. The more is it to be lamented if they abuse the privilege, and that you should encourage them so to do! But what would be the consequence if all men thought with you? The avaricious master would demand the labour of his servants without intermission; and  
deprive

deprive them not only of the opportunities of serving God, but of enjoying the chief comforts of private and of social life. The apprentice and the menial servant would be the slave of the covetuous and hard-hearted; and many individuals would sacrifice their own health and even life, to the inordinate desire of amassing wealth; for you, Sir, are too well acquainted with human nature not to know, that if no Sabbath was enjoined, none could be observed, but by a few conscientious individuals to their own manifest disadvantage, as is now the case in France.

As to the particular degree of strictness upon this day which some persons have enjoined, it is possible it may have been carried to excess. Piety may degenerate to superstition, and devotion to idolatry: but must therefore piety and devotion be excluded from christianity? All extremes are to be avoided, but the danger of the present times is not of too much religion, but of too little:—not of keeping the Sabbath too strict, but of rejecting it altogether. Mr. Wilberforce is therefore to be justified in representing the indifference and contempt of professing christians in general, and especially among



among the higher classes, as a proof of the low state of religion at present in this country.

6. A farther objection is taken against the rigid morality of Mr. Wilberforce, and the Calvinists, from their rejection and censure of *theatrical amusements*. ‘No amusement,’ you think, ‘is more innocent, or more rational than that of a well-regulated theatre.’ It is useless to talk of what exists not. The question is not whether theatrical amusements *might not* possibly be constructed on an unexceptionable plan; but whether such amusements actually do exist? and considering the present state of mankind, whether it be not morally impossible that they should? I am not about to pollute these pages with extracts from our theatrical writers. It is enough to ask one question;—Suppose a series of dialogues to be written on the plan of our modern plays—suppose these dialogues to exhibit scenes of villainy and debauchery—suppose the conversation of the different speakers to be interlarded, one with profaneness, and another with double entendre—Would you, Sir, recommend these as affording innocent amusement? or would you think

think them calculated to improve the morals of our youth?

I even believe it impossible to reform the theatre without taking away every thing which now interests the generality of spectators, who are always best entertained with the exhibition of excentric, profane, and even base characters. Farther, the performance itself must have a bad effect upon the morals of the actors as well as upon the audience. From the performance of vicious characters at the playhouse to that of base and immoral actions in real life, is an easy, dangerous transition: and those accustomed to applaud the former, will hardly be taught thereby, to avoid and to abhor the latter. This appears to me an objection which cannot be obviated, without the public taste could be directed to the love of virtue only, and be taught to abhor vice in all its appearances, fictitious as well as real.

It has been often said that theatres tend to reform the morals of a people, but an instance of that nature has never, to my knowledge, been produced: while of the contrary effect the examples are many and notorious. But instead of grave argument I will quote  
 autho-

authority—an authority the most unexceptionable. The late celebrated and facetious Ned Shuter, (as he was familiarly called) it is well known was, at times, under serious impressions, and occasionally a hearer of Mr. Whitefield and Mr. Kinsman. Meeting with the latter once at Plymouth, after the lives both of Mr. K. and himself had been endangered by exertions in their respective professions, Mr. S. thus addressed him. ‘ Had you died, it would have been in serving the best of masters ; but had I, it would have been in the service of the devil.’ In farther conversation, Mr. S. added—‘ My Lord E. sent for me to-day, and I was glad I could not go.—Poor things ! they are unhappy, and they want Shuter to make them laugh. But, O Sir !—such a life as yours ! As soon as I leave you I shall be King Richard. This is what they call a good play ; as good as some sermons. I acknowledge there are some striking and moral things in it. But after it, I shall come in again with my farce of, *A dish of all sorts*, and knock all that on the head. ‘ Fine reformers are we \*!’—Such is the

\* Evangelical Mag. vol. i. p. 52.

character of the theatre even from a performer.

Once more under this article, permit me to transcribe a passage from your own work in speaking of the Sabbath. ‘ The christian law,’ you say, ‘ expressly requires, not that a seventh part only, but that the whole of our time, and every action of life, should be devoted to the service of God ; and that “ whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to his glory.” So that to a true christian every day is a Sabbath ; and every employment is an act of devotion \*.’—So then, Sir, we must attend the theatre for the glory of God—perform our devotions at a farce, and call this rational religion !!!

But the most ‘ gross and pernicious error’ charged upon us is, that of ‘ *christian idolatry*, or the worship of the Son and Spirit, together with the Father ;’ a crime which, though not of equal magnitude with *beathen* idolatry, as ‘ not productive of similar immoralities,’ is yet ‘ much to be censured and lamented, and carefully to be avoided †.’

\* Review, p. 140.

† Ibid: p. 129.

You admit, indeed, a degree of ‘ rational regard’ may be due to Jesus, and is by ‘ himself required :’—you ‘ revere his memory as the most excellent of human characters, and the most eminent of all the prophets :’—you profess joyfully to ‘ embrace his doctrine, confide in his promise, and bow to his authority.’ Yet you are confident that there ‘ can be no proper foundation for religious *addresses* to him, nor of *gratitude* for favours now received, nor yet of *confidence* in his future interposition in our behalf. All affections and addresses of this nature,’ you therefore ‘ consider as unauthorized by the christian revelation, and infringements on the prerogative of God \*.’

It would not be easy, perhaps, to find any where a more pointed contradiction than this passage affords to the assertions of the New Testament writers, in three important particulars. (1.) You say, there can be ‘ no foundation for religious *addresses*’ to Christ; Paul says, he *besought* the Lord thrice, evidently referring to Christ, in whose strength he triumphed †. (2.) You add, ‘ nor of *grati-*

\* Review, p. 84, 85.      † 1 Cor. xii. 8, 9.



‘ *tude* for favours now received.’ Paul said,  
 ‘ I *thank* Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath  
 ‘ enabled me, for that he counted me faithful,  
 ‘ putting me into the ministry\*.’ (3.) ‘ Nor  
 ‘ of confidence in his future interpositions :’  
 the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says,  
 ‘ Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all  
 ‘ that come unto God by him, seeing he  
 ‘ ever liveth to make *intercession* for them.†’  
 Such is the harmony between the scriptures  
 and your enlightned and philosophic system:  
 and such is the refined love you profess to  
 the Saviour ; a love divested both of *grati-*  
*tude* and *confidence*, and which forbids all  
 communion with him !

But the Christ we worship you consider as  
 a creature of our own imagination, as ‘ such  
 ‘ a being as’ has ‘ in fact no real existence ;’  
 consequently, all the affections founded on  
 these ideas, as ‘ vain and illusory, varying ac-  
 ‘ cording to the variable fancies of men, and  
 ‘ incapable of constituting wise and perma-  
 ‘ nent principles of action ‡.’ The *wisdom*  
 of this principle must certainly be referred to  
 the better judgment of rational critics, and

\* 1 Tim. i. 12. † Heb. vii. 25. ‡ Review. 86.

men of philosophic minds ; but that the principle is capable of real, great, and permanent *effects*, it is sufficient that I appeal to that ‘ noble army of martyrs and confessors,’ who, actuated thereby, have forsaken all things, not counting their own lives dear unto them for the sake of this ‘ ideal, this ‘ imaginary Christ.’ If you, Sir, will condescend to inform us, what superior effects have resulted from your view of the subject, then shall we be able to judge how far this mistaken devotion falls short of ‘ that dignified and manly piety, which is the natural ‘ result of proper attention to’ your ‘ more ‘ just and rational principles.’ Until then, however, we must be permitted still to act upon a principle that has been the common stimulus of apostles, saints, and martyrs.

Having thus, Sir, gone through the various charges you have exhibited against the popular, orthodox, or Calvinistic writers, as you indifferently call them—let me conclude with a recapitulation of your charges against them, or rather against *us*—for I confess myself ambitious for a share in the honours of your censure, and the glorious stigma of the cross.

First,

First, it seems we have too mean, humble and unworthy thoughts of ourselves. Instead of boasting that we are as our Creator made us\*—we confess that we are sinners of great magnitude, and abhor ourselves in dust and ashes. Instead of trusting in ourselves that we are righteous, we account ‘all things but loss for Christ’s sake, that we may be found in him, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.’ Instead of mixing in the fashionable diversions of the age, and conforming our tempers and manners to the world—Instead of accounting all days alike, and mingling business, amusements, and devotion—we study non-conformity to the world; are fearful of listening to its maxims, and drinking in its spirit; and are, in short, so Jewish and antiquated in our notions, that we do not frequent the theatres, and we keep holy the sabbath-day.

Instead of arraigning the goodness, and even justice of our Maker, because his ways

\* Review, p 56, 57.

are often inscrutable to our weak understandings, we lie prostrate in the dust, and confess that ‘ shame and confusion of face be-  
 ‘ longeth unto us, and mercy and forgive-  
 ‘ nefs unto the Lord our God.’

Instead of considering the Lord our Saviour as altogether such an one as ourselves, and regarding him with the cold philosophical esteem of rational christians, we love, we reverence, we adore him. We honour the Son, even as we honour the Father ; and with the whole company of saints and angels, ascribe ‘ Blessing and honour and glory and  
 ‘ power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne,  
 ‘ and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’

These, Sir, are, as Calvinists, our follies, and our crimes ; and having nothing better to offer in our defence, than you have already seen, I leave them with all their force upon the minds of our Readers.—As to you, Sir, permit me to form one wish—that in a dying hour you may enjoy all the confidence, and comfort which these sentiments, and a correspondent conduct have inspired in the breasts of believers, in all ages and in all countries.

I remain finally yours, &c.

T. W.

# APPENDIX.

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ADDRESSED TO THE AUTHOR OF  
LETTERS ON  
HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY.

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## LETTER XVI.

*Additional Remarks on the Authority of Scripture in this Controversy.*

SIR,

**J**UST as the above MS. was prepared for press, I saw your Letters advertised to *bind up* with Mr. Bellham's, and it immediately occurred to me, as proper to examine them, before I obtruded my observations on the public; since it might prove that you had elucidated some of his paradoxes, or obviated some of his mistakes. And though, in this respect I am disappointed, I confess myself perfectly satisfied that, whatever becomes of your cause, your friends have reason



son to congratulate themselves, that it is in no danger of suffering from the want of zeal or talents, while it is in the hands of such able advocates as yourself and Mr. B.; especially in contending with Calvinists, who, as you very modestly insinuate, must, to be sure, be too much depraved in intellect to contend with Unitarians, or even to merit their attention\*. Under all these disadvantages, however, we are not dejected nor discouraged: we neither ask for quarter, nor retreat. We know that *great is the truth, and must ultimately prevail*; and therefore, if you would have the *courtesy* to permit a brother Layman to whisper in your ear, he would suggest the salutary hint of Ahab to Benhadad—‘Let not him that putteth on his armour boast himself as he that putteth it off†.’

Were victory my object, and were it to depend upon a display of superior ability, I could have no hope in contending with a philosopher of your size. Should I, however, be defeated and put to silence, I should not have the mortification to reflect that it were

\* Letters on Hereditary Depravity, p. 169.

† 1 Kings, xx. 11.

by a writer of defective intellect. No, Sir, the disease of human nature is seated rather in the heart than in the head: and the judgment is depraved, not by a derangement of the faculties, as you insinuate we maintain\*, but by the ascendancy of carnal appetites and corrupt affections.

But truth, and not victory, is the object of these Letters. Were I convinced that the principles here defended are not the doctrines of the Bible, or that they tend to sully the glory of the divine perfections, I hope I should possess honesty and honour enough to pronounce those hard words—*I was mistaken*. This at present, indeed, appears impossible; and while my views remain the same, and feeling the great comfort and importance of the Calvinistic doctrines, may I not be permitted to be their humble apologist, and plead even with you, Sir, who, by the superior lights of reason and philosophy, have been tempted to renounce them?

So far as you tread in the steps of Mr B. it cannot be necessary for me to trace you. Where your arguments or objections are the

\* Letters, p. 169.

same, the same answers may apply. But when you tread new ground, and advance new arguments either from scripture or from reason, I shall venture to follow you with animadversions and remarks. The present Letter will be confined to what you say on the *authority* of scripture, and its *evidence* on the subject of human, or (as you term it) *Hereditary Depravity*.

On the authority of scripture as a test of truth, I have already addressed a Letter to Mr. B. ; but as this is the hinge on which the controversy chiefly turns, I shall take the liberty of subjoining a farther remark on this subject.

I observe, that both you and Mr. B. respect the scriptures so far as you think they countenance your opinions ; but wherever they appear adverse, you reduce their authority to a mere nullity.

Christians of your description indeed acknowledge, that the *word of God* ought to be implicitly received ; but then you admit nothing to be the word of God but what agrees perfectly with your pre-conceived opinions. It is in vain to plead the authority of prophets or apostles, or of Jesus Christ himself ;

since with you, *reason*, and reason *alone* must be the guide. ‘ When a doctrine is proposed which evidently contradicts’ in *your view* of it, ‘ first principles universally admitted’, you ‘ reject it\*,’ without enquiring from what authority it comes.—Here, Sir, permit me to say, language of this kind would not be tolerated in a Calvinist. Supposing the doctrines of Calvinism to contradict ‘ first principles universally admitted’, which is the point you should have proved; you supercede all evidence from revelation, by directing your enquiries, not into the validity of scripture proofs, but simply into the agreement of the proposed doctrine with your first principles previously assumed.

But let us hear your argument; you think ‘ It is infinitely more natural to suspect that ‘ a wrong interpretation is given by weak ‘ and fallible men, to those scriptural expressions which are thought to contain the ‘ sentiment enforced, than that it should be ‘ in reality the word of God. Since scripture phraseology is so *extremely various*, ‘ that every rash and inconsiderate mortal

\* Letters, page 35, 36.

‘ may find out some expressions that shall  
 ‘ seem to countenance his favourite dog-  
 ‘ mata:’ you therefore ‘ think it highly ne-  
 ‘ cessary to lay down for’ yourselves, ‘ some  
 ‘ indubitable positions, which may safely  
 ‘ conduct’ you ‘ through the labyrinths of  
 ‘ error and contrarieties \*.’

As you have done us the honour to com-  
 pare the doctrines of Calvinism with those  
 of Popery, and even with its most absurd  
 tenet, Transubstantiation † ; you cannot  
 justly be offended, if I return the compli-  
 ment, by observing the perfect correspond-  
 ence between your argument in favour of  
 reason, with that of the Catholics in favour  
 of the authority of the church. They speak  
 with the same contempt as you do of the  
 sacred writings, and the danger of mistak-  
 ing scriptural expressions ; only, instead of re-  
 curring to your ‘ first principles,’ they ap-  
 peal to a *living head*, and certainly have the  
 advantage in this respect. However, the par-  
 allel may shew, as was my design in stating  
 it, that Popery and Unitarianism are alike  
 enemies to the Bible ; and treat it as the Sa-

\* P. 36.

† P. 23.



viour of mankind was treated upon Calvary, when he was on both hands derided and blasphemed. For if scripture has no authority further than it agrees with your ‘first principles,’ or their *ci-devant* Oracle at Rome—If either reason or tradition is *alone* to be ‘the guide,’ of what use, give me leave to ask, is scripture? Might we not do just as well without it, and save infinite perplexity thereby?

But, in justice to your argument, let us attend to its application, and consider the particular instance in which you try a proposed doctrine by your ‘first principles universally admitted.’ You ‘know, for example, that the *God of grace* cannot possess a character essentially different from the *God of nature*, since he is the same God:’ You ‘*naturally expect* much clearer displays of universal benignity under the former character, than those which the latter exhibits to’ your ‘admiring view; and therefore *suspect* those doctrines which create an opposition\*.’ Now this supposes, in the first place, that the character

\* Letters, p: 36.

of ' the God of nature ' is certainly more obvious and determinate than the character of the ' God of grace,' since you make the former a criterion of the latter ; but this is not a ' principle universally admitted,' and therefore not one of those on which you profess to argue. You know, Sir, we take the opposite course to harmonize these subjects ; and believing the light of Revelation to be superior to that of Nature, explain the character of the God of nature in conformity to that of the God of grace.

Again, you '*naturally expect* much clearer ' displays of universal benignity under the ' character of the God of grace,' than are exhibited in the other character. Probably *you* may ; but do you mean to set down *your natural expectations* for ' first principles universally admitted ?' If not, they are nothing to our purpose. I do not mean, however, to dispute the fact. I conceive even the Calvinistic doctrines, horrid as they seem to you, represent the God of grace as infinitely more benignant than the God of nature appears, either in creation, or in your liberal notions of his character ; and no less *universally* so, since nature does not, any more than scripture, re-  
pre-

present God as indifferent to moral evil, or benignant to sinners obstinately and finally impenitent. We deny, therefore, that our doctrines create an opposition, or give any just reason for such suspicions. Upon the whole then, your demonstration, founded on first principles, dwindles into a *suspicion* founded upon a mistake arising from your own prejudices and misconceptions.

But principles, as well as persons, when they become suspected, must hope for no very lenient treatment: it is well, however, if they may be brought to trial; and we have no objection that *fair criticism*, if it may deserve that name, should be the judge. It might seem reasonable, that the scriptures should be heard in their own defence. But this is too much to be expected: if admitted at all, it must be in such parts only as favour, or may be supposed to favour, the cause of our opponents. For these ‘ distinguish *most* carefully, the plain and simple  
 ‘ truths expressly taught by Christ himself  
 ‘ and his apostles, *after* they were commissioned by their Master to preach the gospel,  
 ‘ from those strong figurative expressions,  
 ‘ and bold representations, occasionally employed

‘ ployed by the same apostles in their epistolary writings; where, it is the invariable object, not to preach *another* gospel, nor make an *addition* to that preached in their personal ministry; but to inforce the truths already promulgated, upon the hearts and consciences of the new converts to christianity \* .’

Does not this passage, in the first place, imply that the epistolary writings of the New Testament were written *before* the apostles were commissioned to preach? If so, it would sufficiently account for their being less correct and explicit in their doctrine; but, as you know the direct contrary to be the fact, it naturally leans in our favour; for it is not usual for men to lessen in judgment as they encrease in wisdom and experience.

But their object, you say, was not to preach ‘another gospel.’ True, and for this reason, we conclude they taught the same doctrines in their sermons as in their Letters, only, we have the latter at length, and the former in abridgment. To which may be added, that the former being addressed ge-

\* Review, p. 37, 39.

nerally to a mixed multitude, were in great measure confined to first principles, whereas the epistles were directed to believers, ‘ going on unto perfection,’ and consequently, went farther into the peculiar tenets of christianity.

You admit, that ‘ the abettors of the Calvinistic doctrines act consistently, in being strenuous for the support of original depravity ; for they justly view it as the *foundation* of a system which they have mistaken for genuine christianity, and which cannot be subverted without the demolition of the superstructure\*.’ This doctrine is indeed a fundamental principle ; but when you insinuate that we displace Jesus Christ the true foundation, in order to lay that of Hereditary Depravity†, I cannot acquit you of dissingenuity and gross misrepresentation, in taking the advantage of a common ambiguity of language. Human depravity is certainly a fundamental principle in christianity, and the knowledge of this may be considered as a foundation of our theology, in the same sense as a knowledge

\* Letters, p. 42.

† Ibid, p. 38.



of diseases may be considered as the foundation of medical science: but does this prevent the knowledge of medicine from being equally fundamental? Christ is indeed the foundation of our faith, our hope, and our obedience; but how you, who reject his Deity, atonement, and intercession, can pretend that ‘faith in Christ is the foundation’ of your scheme, I confess I know not. You seem to admit him to have been a good man, a moral philosopher and a prophet; but if he were no more, I see not why any other philosopher might not do as well—perhaps better; for I recollect, that Dr. Priestley, though he admits that Jesus taught the truth in a popular way, yet very much doubts whether, in some instances, he accurately and properly understood it!!!\* But I turn from such impieties with disgust, to adore the injured Saviour, and to recommend to his compassionate regard, those that revile and persecute him, not knowing what they do. That this mercy may extend to you, Sir, is the sincere and fervent wish of,

Your ready servant in the cause of Truth.

T. W.

\* Priestley on Necessity, § xi.

## LETTER XVII.

*Of Man's Original State and Fall.*

Sir,

AS it is not my object to defend any human scheme, or systematic definitions of this doctrine, I pass over your long extracts from protestant catechisms and confessions. I wish to keep as near as possible to the simplicity of the inspired writers, and plead for their literal and obvious sense, in opposition to those who would reduce all the doctrines of the Bible to figurative and poetic forms of speech. If, on the other hand, some good men have carried their creeds and confessions beyond the scriptures, I do not consider myself bound to follow them: the cloister we keep to the language and doctrine of inspiration, the better.

It appears evident to me, that the sacred writers speak of man under the different states of innocent and fallen, which you, and other Unitarian writers, confound together. In the first instance, they describe the whole

whole creation as *very good*, and man in particular as created in the *image of God* \*. This expression you refer to *dominion* only, whereas the apostle expressly refers it to *knowledge* also; and in another place to *righteousness* and *true holiness*. ‘The new man, renewed in knowledge, after him that created him.’—‘The new man after God [i. e. after the image of God] is renewed in righteousness and true holiness.†’

To make the image of God consist only in dominion, is to represent the Deity rather as an arbitrary tyrant than as a being of infinite perfections. Mr. Bulkeley more judiciously includes the resemblance of his intelligence, and moral excellence, as well as government ‡.

‘God made man [men or mankind] upright; but they have sought out many inventions||,’ or devices: an expression which does not indeed refer simply and exclusively to that act of our first parents, which brought death into the world, and all our woe; but includes the various wicked

\* Gen. i. 27, 31. † Col. iii. 10. Eph. iv. 24.

‡ Apology, p. 21, &c. || Eccles. vii. 29.

devices of their posterity, by which the depravity originating in their defection, has encreased in its propagation; still, however, it asserts the fact for which it was produced, that man is fallen, degenerated and depraved.

It has been common to argue this point also from the introduction of mortality, especially the mortality of children. So Paul himself; ‘ Wherefore, as by one man sin  
‘ entered into the world, and death by sin, so  
‘ death passed upon all men, for that all have  
‘ sinned. For, until the law sin was in the  
‘ world: but sin is not imputed where there  
‘ is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from  
‘ Adam to Moses, even over them that had  
‘ not sinned, after the similitude of Adam’s  
‘ transgression’—namely, infants, who were not yet chargeable with actual iniquity. He therefore concludes in the subsequent verses, that ‘ by one man’s disobedience many  
‘ were made sinners;’ and that ‘ by the offence  
‘ of one, judgment came upon all men unto  
‘ condemnation.’—That sin reigned unto  
‘ death’—and in the next chapter, ‘ that the  
‘ wages of sin is death.\*’

\* Rom. v. 12. *ad finem*. vi. ult.

Most of the above facts and assertions you have controverted—‘ God made man upright —in his own image—very good,’ say the scriptures. ‘ We may innocently presume,’ say you, ‘ that the powers and faculties of Adam and Eve were as limited as our own, and that their *propensities* to good and evil were *perfectly similar*\*’ to ours. Either then we have no propensities to evil, or *they* had the same. The latter I presume is not your sentiment, and the former has been shewn irreconcilable either to scripture or to fact†.

‘ In the infantile state of the world,’ you think, ‘ it was the easiest thing in nature to be innocent, for scarcely could a vice be committed‡.’ If so, how aggravated was their crime to sin, when obedience was so easy, and vice so difficult! and yet, with a strange inconsistency, you attempt to prove their crime was too inconsiderable to merit any thing farther than temporal death; and that, even this was not so much introduced as a punishment, as a convenience and a blessing.

\* Letters, p. 60. † See above, Letters iii. iv. and v.

‡ Letters, p. 61.

Y<sup>our</sup>



Your words are, ‘ Let us remember, that  
 ‘ as life is the free gift of God, the conti-  
 ‘ nuation of our existence to a *perpetuity*  
 ‘ cannot be claimed by us as a natural right.  
 ‘ We may add, that it would prove a *perpe-  
 ‘ tual curse* before the minds of men were  
 ‘ fully prepared for so vast a design.\*’—Yes!  
 ‘ Perpetuity of life,’ or immortality, in pa-  
 radise ‘ a perpetual curse!!’ Surely, Sir, what-  
 ever your aversion may be to mysteries,  
 you must have a peculiar delight in para-  
 doxes, to represent immortality, the first  
 great blessing of the gospel, as a perpetual  
 curse to men in their most innocent and  
 happy state!—But, perhaps the last clause  
 was meant to save your consistency—‘ before  
 ‘ the minds of men were prepared for so vast  
 ‘ a design!’ So then, men are not prepared  
 for immortality by innocence and happiness,  
 as in the golden age of primeval existence;  
 but after they were depraved and wretched!  
 —This, I suppose, is one of the lucid prin-  
 ciples of rational divinity.

It is granted, that ‘ infinite wisdom is able  
 ‘ to convert the greatest seeming evil into

\* Letters, p. 63.

‘ the most substantial good,’ and to the true christian, even death itself is made a blessing; but why you should here introduce an encomium on death, and a censure on immortality, I am at a loss to conceive; unless it be to offer an apology for sin—to represent it as a trifle that could not provoke the Deity to any severe resentment, nor bring down any real punishment; but only a temporary inconvenience, that in the end must be a great advantage.

But you have elsewhere admitted, that death was threatned as the penalty of transgression—that it was an object of terror to our first parents—and afterward denounced as its just and final punishment\*. Now, Sir, would you be understood to mean, that the Deity made ‘ a most substantial good’ the penalty of sin? Surely, if immortality were in itself ‘ a perpetual curse,’ that should have been the punishment of sin; and death, as a ‘ most substantial good,’ the reward of obedience and fidelity.

But the reference just made, leads me to notice your decided opinion on the nature of

\* See Letters p. 128, 129.

the death threatened to our first progenitors, which you are confident could extend no farther than the *literal* meaning of that expression, ‘Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.’ Permit me, in this place, to ask a few questions. Do you believe a state of future punishment? Is not that punishment a second death? Was it not threatened under the idea of death? Why might it not then be included in the first threatening—in the first sentence? Indeed the contrary supposition is attended with difficulties that I am persuaded you have not considered. You, doubtless, admit the doctrine of a future life, and that Adam, as well as his posterity, were subjects of it, consequently, exposed to its penalties, as well as intitled to its rewards. Do you then suppose that God would inflict such a punishment without warning sinners of it? Or if he did threaten it, under what term is it expressed beside that of death?

To say, this is recurring to a figurative sense, is no objection, since in the first stage of language it is highly figurative. Many Unitarian writers reduce the whole history of the fall to allegory, though I think unjustly. Why then object to the figurative  
 use

use of a term so frequently used figuratively in scripture? Might I not add the style of Moses, and the very genius of the language evidently require it? The trees of knowledge and of life—the seed of the serpent and of the woman—are evidently metaphorical; and even the term *life* frequently includes happiness: Why then may not the term *death* include misery and pain?

Do you still ask, what concern have we in this transaction of our first parent? Or what part have we either in his crime or punishment? The answer to this depends on another question—Was Adam a distinct isolated individual like each of us? Or was he the federal head of his posterity? The former appears to be your hypothesis, and the latter mine.

If we recur to the original history, it is true that Adam is spoken of throughout as an individual, with little or no *express* reference to his offspring; but are they not, therefore, to be understood as equally interested in the prohibition and the threatening? Was our first parent to be exposed to death alone, and his posterity to be immortal? Was Eve only to conceive in sorrow? Or Adam alone to

sweat, and labour, and return to dust? You will not suppose this, because you tell us, on the authority of an apostle, that ‘in Adam all die.’—Suppose, on the other hand, our first parents had preserved their innocence, were they to live in paradise alone? were not their posterity also to be happy and immortal? But if mankind at large would have reaped blessings from their obedience—if they have suffered the multi-form curse of labour, sickness, and death from their disobedience, do not these circumstances prove that we are deeply interested in the conduct and fate of Adam, and is not this tantamount to what Calvinistic divines intend by the covenant between God and him?

But if we are involved in the punishment of Adam’s sin, we are involved in the whole of it, for there seems no possible way of our being involved only in a part. If we are exposed to death thereby, we are exposed to all the evils included in that term, and consequently to future punishment—unless you will pretend that the punishment of sin extends no farther than the present life. And if the punishment of sin be eternal, then are we



we exposed unto eternal punishment. But on this question I have made some remarks in a preceding Letter\*.

To return—Had we no sacred book but that of Genesis, I think we must admit that mankind are involved in the whole penalty of Adam's sin, or roundly deny their interest in any part of it, and particularly in mortality; but as we have the New Testament, if we admit the testimony of Paul, the point is perfectly determinate and clear—observing by the way, that the apostle repeatedly compares Christ and Adam as the heads and representatives of their respective offspring. All in Adam died in him—all in Christ live in him. As by one man's offence many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. That the latter, Sir, may be your happiness as well as mine, is the sincere wish of

Your humble servant, &c.

\* Letter vii. near the close:

## LETTER XVIII.

*Scripture Proofs of Natural Depravity vindicated ; and its Consistency with other Doctrines of Scripture.*

SIR,

HOWEVER rational and philosophical may be the Unitarian scheme, it must, I think, be obvious to every impartial observer that it cannot derive much support from the Bible ; and that the *forte* of its advocates does not consist in scripture evidence. Indeed the most, in general, that these Gentlemen attempt is, to ward off the arrows aimed against them from that quarter ; and even in this, I conceive their success is far from being proportionate to their zeal. This remark will, I apprehend, apply to your animadversions, and Mr. Belsham's, on the evidence produced by Mr. Wilberforce. Part of your objections, as well as Mr. B.'s have been already considered, and there are but two instances, as I recollect, which appear to me to require farther observation.

The

The first, of these relates to an expression of David, who acknowledges his being born in sin. You coincide with Mr. Bulkley's idea\*; and conceive, that ' He adopted a phrase *proverbial* among the Jews, by which ' he intimated that his vicious propensities ' were so great, that had he been born with ' them, they could not have been stronger. That this expression was proverbial in the time of David you offer no proof within a thousand years; and, judging from circumstances, I should be much more inclined to believe that the expression became proverbial from David's use of it, than that he adopted it because proverbial. The use, however, of a similar expression by two persons, supposing them contemporary, will not prove it to be a proverb; nor will its being proverbial prove it to have little or no meaning: indeed, the emphasis you have yourself given to the words†, is sufficient to overturn your own hypothesis: for if David's propensities to sin could not have been stronger had he been born with them, you suppose him as much under the influence of those propen-

\* See above, p. 21.      † Letters, p. 72.

fities, and as unable to resist them, as we possibly can do.

As to the expression ‘born in sins’ used by the Pharisees, I doubt much if it had any allusion or relation to that of the psalmist. The occasion of the words will give a better light into their meaning. The Pythagorean notion of the transmigration of souls, it should seem obtained pretty early among the Jews. The author of the apocryphal book of Wisdom appears to allude to it, when he says, ‘being good, I entered into a body ‘undefiled \*;’ implying both a previous existence, and that a residence in blemished or defective bodies, was a kind of punishment for the vices of a former state. Such ideas also the disciples of our Lord appear to have entertained, when they asked him, saying, ‘Master, did this man sin, or his parents, ‘that he was born blind †?’ assuming that so grievous a calamity must have been owing to some remarkable cause; either as a judgment on his parents for a heinous crime, or a punishment on himself for vices committed in a previous state. But the Pharisees, not

\* Wisdom viii. 20.

† John ix. 3.

hesitating like the disciples, boldly fix the cause upon the man himself—‘ Thou wast ‘ *altogether* born in sins, and dost thou teach ‘ us \*?’ As if they had said, ‘ Thou art an ‘ old offender—a sinner before thy birth ‘ here, and suffering the punishment of thy ‘ sins.’ It does not appear that these passages have any reference to original sin, consequently, they determine nothing respecting it; but I confess, I cannot help considering these Pythagorean, or Platonic notions, as corruptions of the scripture doctrine of original sin, and an attempt to render it more rational and palatable to philosophic minds.

The other passage on which you have animadverted, has been also considered in my Letters to Mr. Belsham†. I have only farther to remark upon the terms, ‘ *by nature* ‘ children of wrath, &c.’ that though I cannot here go through the several passages in which the expression is used in scripture, I am fully satisfied, from a careful examination, that it always intends something con-natural to us, either originally or adventitiously :

\* John ix. 34.      † Eph. ii. 3. See above, p. 29.



and in the text, which looks most favourably toward the sense of *custom*, I have the authority of Le Clerc himself for saying, that it signifies neither custom nor disposition; but is opposed to instruction\*: i. e. it signifies what is derived from *nature* previous to instruction or example.

Having, as you suppose, warded off the force of scripture evidence on this question, you endeavour, in a few instances, to shew, that the doctrine for which we plead is absolutely inconsistent with other doctrines admitted and owned by us, and especially with the following:

First, You think it totally destroys ‘all the ‘subsequent *temptations* of Satan †.’—Just the contrary; the depravity of the heart is what the temptations of the enemy chiefly act upon: it is the traitor within that opens to him the citadel. Satan could not prevail against Jesus, because he had nothing in him ‡; he prevails against us because he has so much.

Again, Original Depravity opposes ‘the ‘true and proper *incarnation* of the Son of

\* Le Clerc on Hammond, in 1 Cor. xi. 14.

† Letters, p. 117.

‡ John xiv. 30.

‘ God \*.’ How so? Human nature is depraved, and could not in the course of ordinary generation, or *without a miracle*, be propagated pure; and therefore—what? It could not be rendered pure by the *immediate* and *miraculous* agency of the Holy Spirit. Is not this answered in the very statement?—So much for this boasted argument that could not be evaded!

In other parts of your work, you represent the same doctrine as highly incompatible with the divine perfections, as revealed in scripture, and even understood by Calvinists themselves. Thus particularly, you insinuate the inconsistency of ‘ offers to penitent ‘ sinners of pardon, grace, and strength,’ as but a mockery and an insult to the *non-elect*, who have no power to receive them; and the actual bestowment of these blessings on the elect as an injury and injustice to the world at large. Such is the tendency (as I suppose you will admit) of the reasoning in your first Letter †; and this has been more forcibly and explicitly urged by other writers on the same side, particularly Dr. Priestley‡.

\* Letters, p. 118. † See page 16, 17, and note.

‡ On Necessity, § xii.

My limits will not admit of going at length into this inquiry; but I would beg leave to suggest an hint, which, whatever may be its effect on others, should silence gentlemen who adopt the scheme of Philosophical Necessity, as is now generally the case, I believe, with Unitarians.—For every thing that can be urged on this question may be reduced to this principle, that creatures of necessity *cannot* be the subjects of duties or motives—virtue or vice—praise or blame—reward or punishment; whereas Dr. Priestley himself has, I think, very satisfactorily proved that it is upon this principle alone they *can* be either\*. Now, if a divine predetermination of the present circumstances, and future fate of an individual do not prevent his being the proper subject of duties and motives, of virtue and vice, &c. where is the inconsistency of exhorting or enjoining upon him things, not naturally impossible, but only accidentally or morally so, by the pre-ordination and arrangement of circumstances? The Necessarian, who believes the objects of future punishment

\* On Necessity, § vii.

certain and determined, admits the very thing which he charges as an inconsistency upon the Calvinist: for whether future punishment be temporary or final, vindictive or corrective, will make no difference on this question. ‘ It is only (as Dr. P. farther observes) where the necessity of sinning arises from some other cause than a man’s own *disposition of mind*, that we ever say there is an impropriety in punishing a man for his conduct. If the impossibility of acting well has arisen from a *bad disposition or habit*, its having been impossible with that disposition or habit to act virtuously, is never any reason for our forbearing punishment \*.’ But if it be consistent to punish a man for necessary evil, or reward for necessary good, it cannot be inconsistent to promise or threaten, or propose other motives to obedience †.

But you are more bold than the above writer, or indeed any other objector I have met with; for you suppose that God can-

\* On Necessity, § vi.

† See further considerations on this subject in Fuller’s Systems compared, Letter vi.

not create ‘ the meanest reptile either with  
 ‘ a determination to render it miserable, or  
 ‘ with a *prescience of its misery* \*.’ So then,  
 not the meanest reptile can be miserable, or  
 the Creator must cease to be omniscient !—  
 Presumptuous man ! wilt thou prescribe laws  
 to the Supreme, and tell him he is *bound* to  
 make thee happy ? Surely, Sir, if made  
 happy, such creatures as we are may be  
 content to owe our happiness to the grace of  
 our Benefactor ! at least, this is the disposi-  
 tion of Calvinists, and in particular of,

Yours, &c.

\* I observe in the *Analytical Review* for June, that  
 you have, on the remonstrance of these Reviewers,  
 endeavoured to palliate this bold assertion, by insert-  
 ing the word *eternal* ; God cannot create ‘ the meanest  
 ‘ reptile—with a prescience of its *eternal* misery ;’  
 which is saying, God is absolutely *obliged*, by a neces-  
 sity of nature, to make, or endeavour to make, all  
 his creatures *eventually* and *eternally* happy, however  
 depraved and miserable they may make themselves.  
 A supposition this, which at once annihilates either the  
 infinity of divine Wisdom, or the freeness of divine  
 Mercy ; and is therefore little less obnoxious than your  
 original assertion.

\* Letters p. 27.



## LETTER XIX.

*Of the Possibility of Hereditary Depravity.*

SIR,

IN the next place, you endeavour to prove the doctrine of Hereditary Depravity an impossibility, as utterly inconsistent with the constitution of human nature, either physically or metaphysically considered.

Admitting the literal history of the fall, which, however you appear to doubt, you confidently enquire: ‘ Could the indulgence  
 ‘ of this one propensity produce, by any  
 ‘ physical law of the constitution, such a  
 ‘ singular change in their natures, that they  
 ‘ should be necessitated by this change to  
 ‘ procreate a race of beings directly opposite  
 ‘ in character to the original nature infused  
 ‘ by the immediate power of the Almighty\*.’  
 —To this I reply, that when Adam propagated human nature, it must necessarily, without a miracle, have been propagated in

\* Letters, p. 101.

the state in which it then was, and not in that in which it formerly had been \*. Thus you are compelled to admit, that Adam was created immortal; yet having been subjected to mortality by sin, he propagated a mortal offspring; and the contrary would have been against a fundamental law of nature, that *like begets like*; and, ‘Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?’

You allow indeed, ‘that a prevailing cast of character may be transmitted to the *immediate offspring* †;’ and I think you will not deny that this ‘prevailing cast of character’ may sometimes run through two or three successive generations—Where then is the impossibility of its being transmitted further? As to what you say of this hypothesis, attributing ‘infinitely greater force to one particular desire, excited and gratified in a single instance, in *opposition* to the general character, than to the influence of the general character itself ‡,’ I must refer you to Mr. *Belfham*, who assures us, ‘it is an invariable principle, that *one* vice stamps

\* See above, p. 234, 5. † Letters, p. 101.

‡ Ibid. p. 102.

‘ a character vicious’—and that ‘ the union  
 ‘ of a single vice with a constellation of vir-  
 ‘ tues, will contaminate them all \*.’ But  
 I hardly need have gone so far ; you your-  
 self have given a sufficient answer. The  
 first offence, you admit, ‘ totally obliterated  
 ‘ every title to the character of innocence.  
 ‘ The unfortunate pair could no longer re-  
 ‘ joice in the simplicity and purity of their  
 ‘ minds. The dreadful penalty was now in-  
 ‘ curred. The deed once perpetrated, in-  
 ‘ evitably exposed them to the threatned  
 ‘ punishment †.’ And how is it possible  
 that this change should have no effect on  
 their posterity ?

It is useless and impertinent to enquire  
*how* the first offence produced effects so fatal  
 to Adam and his posterity. There are but  
 few facts of which the *modus* can be satis-  
 factorily explained. But it is certainly as  
 easy to shew how a fallen being should pro-  
 pagate a fallen nature as a perfect one. Nor  
 is it necessary to shew how the beasts acquired  
 their ferocity, &c. If we cannot account  
 for this fact, it will not invalidate the other.

\* See above, p. 35, &c. † Letters, p. 104, 5.

Your remark on this point, however, sufficiently silences your objection on another; for this 'constitution of things is certainly  
' as contrary to our primary notions of the  
' divine character, as the permission of moral  
' evil in the moral world,' however that evil may have been introduced or propagated.

' If we consider the subject *metaphysically*  
' we shall be presented,' you conceive, ' with  
' objections not *less* formidable : ' but if they are not *more* formidable, we shall find little occasion to be alarmed. First, the doctrine is ' not very consistent with the ideas ' we ' entertain of mind \*.' A materialist, you think, might do better; he might compare human nature to *bread* or *cheese*, and the corruption of it to *leaven* or *curd*; a small quantity of which might corrupt the mass†. We are obliged to you for this *bread and cheese argument*, but as we are not materialists, we cannot use it; neither are we sufficiently in want of argument to employ it, if we could. Now comes, however, your formidable *dilemma*, supposing the spirituality of the human mind, the soul, must be

\* Letters, p. 110.

† Ib. 111.

either created and infused immediately by God, or it must be propagated with the body, by ordinary generation.

‘ The first hypothesis obviously renders  
 ‘ the doctrine of hereditary depravity an  
 ‘ impossibility. For the mind of man, the  
 ‘ offending part, could not have been in the  
 ‘ loins of our first parents, when they com-  
 ‘ mitted the offence, and therefore could  
 ‘ not have been contaminated by it. The  
 ‘ spirit of every individual proceeding imme-  
 ‘ diately from the hands of his Maker, must  
 ‘ be as pure, as refined, and as free from sin,  
 ‘ as the soul of Adam on the day of his  
 ‘ creation . . . According to this hypothesis,  
 ‘ therefore, the genuine doctrine of original  
 ‘ sin must be renounced. For, whatever  
 ‘ pollution the soul may contract when com-  
 ‘ pelled to inhabit the corporeal frame, this  
 ‘ must simply be a sin of infection, not he-  
 ‘ reditary guilt . . . And supposing this to be  
 ‘ so insufferably vile as to pollute and deprave  
 ‘ every soul that enters, that soul cannot be  
 ‘ charged with hereditary guilt, however it  
 ‘ may be pitied for being constrained to oc-  
 ‘ cupy so improper a dwelling \*.’

\* Letters, p. 112---14.



The latter part of this reasoning is foreign and irrelevant to the subject, because we do not place the depravity of human nature in the material system, nor do we resolve it into a mere infection or pollution; and the former part goes upon the supposition of human depravity being an evil positively implanted, whereas the whole is completely to be accounted for upon another principle, which I shall explain in the accurate terms of the judicious Pref. *Edwards*.

‘ The case with man (he says) was plainly this: when God made man at first, he implanted in him two kinds of principles. There was an inferior kind, which may be called natural, being the principles of mere human nature; such as self-love, with those natural appetites and passions which belong to the nature of man: . . . . These, when alone, and left to themselves, are what the scriptures sometimes call *flesh* \*. Beside these there were superior principles, spiritual, holy, and divine, . . . which are called the *divine nature* †. These principles may, in some sense, be called supernatural,

\* Rom. viii. 6.

† 2 Pet. i. 4.

‘ being (however concreated or connate, yet)  
 ‘ such as are above those principles that are  
 ‘ essentially . . . . connected with *mere human*  
 ‘ *nature*, and such as depend on man’s union  
 ‘ and communion with God. . . . . When  
 ‘ man sinned, and broke God’s covenant,  
 ‘ and fell under his curse, these superior  
 ‘ principles left his heart : for indeed God  
 ‘ then left him : . . . . the Holy Spirit, that  
 ‘ divine inhabitant, forsook the house . . . .  
 ‘ Therefore immediately the superior divine  
 ‘ principle wholly ceased ; so light ceases in  
 ‘ a room when the candle is withdrawn :  
 ‘ and thus man was left in a state of dark-  
 ‘ ness, woeful corruption, and ruin ; nothing  
 ‘ but flesh without Spirit : [i. e. the fleshly  
 ‘ principle without the Holy Spirit] and as  
 ‘ Adam’s nature became corrupt without  
 ‘ God’s implanting or infusing any evil thing  
 ‘ into his nature ; so does the nature of  
 ‘ his posterity. God dealing with Adam as  
 ‘ the head of his posterity, and treating them  
 ‘ as one, he deals with his posterity as having  
 ‘ *all sinned in him*. And, therefore, as God  
 ‘ withdrew spiritual communion and his vital  
 ‘ gracious influence from the common head,  
 ‘ so he withholds the same from all the  
 ‘ members,

‘ members, as they come into existence :  
 ‘ whereby they come into the world mere  
 ‘ *flesh* [in the sense above explained] and  
 ‘ entirely under the government of natural  
 ‘ and inferior principles ; and so become  
 ‘ corrupt, as Adam did \*.’

Now if the depravity of human nature arise from a defect only of that in human nature, which was lost and forfeited by the sin of our first parent, how is it an absolute *impossibility* ?

As to the other hypothesis of the propagation, or traduction of souls, this you seem to think might account for it ; but then it is itself attended with its *difficulties*, which is also true of every theological system or opinion. You will readily admit this to be the case in every point connected with the doctrine of spirits, and I think you must admit that the idea of *conscious matter* is attended with its difficulties, and those of no small consideration. Must we therefore deny that it is possible to *think*, because both the doctrines of spirits, and of materialism, are attended with their difficulties ? Yet surely

\* Edwards on Orig. Sin. Part iv. chap. 2.

this would be as rational as to pretend that human nature cannot be depraved, because we know not how that depravity is communicated through the species.

As to the consequences fastened upon this system, that it supposes ‘ Myriads and myriads of miserable embryos, that never saw the light of the sun will as infallibly be plunged into the flames of hell, as the most abandoned of our species ; and [that] every germ that possesses a physical possibility of existing in this world shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly in the next !!!\*’ This consequence, I say, is purely and entirely your own ; and the three notes of attention you have added only call our admiration to your talent of disfiguring the system of an opponent, since certainly no Calvinist will admit your inference, nor does it belong to our hypothesis. For,

1. To maintain that the human race *merit* the divine displeasure in a future state, and that they actually *suffer* it, are very different positions. That infants may be exposed to God’s righteous judgments, is indeed gene-

\* Letters, p. 115.

rally maintained by Calvinists, and is strongly supported by the fact of their suffering the agonies of disease and death : but I know of very few divines in the present age, who maintain or suppose that a single child of Adam ever suffered, or will suffer, the punishments of a future state, without having confirmed and aggravated his original guilt by actual transgression.

2. Your zeal to blacken Calvinism carries you into an extreme of absurdity, of which you do not seem to be aware. For how can unconscious embryos and unanimated germs of existence be plunged into the flames of hell? or if that were possible, what would be the utmost amount of the sufferings of myriads of unconscious, unanimated germs of possible existence?—Is not this multiplying words without ideas, and attempting to terrify us with a rhetorical flourish upon nothing?—Once more, I remain,

Yours, &c.



## L E T T E R XX.

*Recapitulation of Evidence—Conclusion.*

SIR,

HAVING gone through what I judged most important, both in your Letters and Mr. Belsham's, it may not be improper to conclude with drawing into one view the principal proofs and arguments for the truth of *Original*, or as you term it, 'Hereditary Depravity,' as they lay scattered in several of my Letters, and subjoin such observations as may occur in the recapitulation.

The main question seems to divide itself into two branches—the *extent* of human depravity, and the *cause* of it.

On the first question, we have seen the uniform representation of the scriptures of both Testaments, from Moses to Paul, to be, that human nature is universally and totally depraved. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked—the fountain of all iniquity. The thoughts are evil—only and continually evil—even from our youth

up. And to this perfectly corresponds the conduct of mankind. They are all gone astray—every one turned to his own way. There is none righteous, none that doeth good, no not one \*. And when the world at large is described, either by our Lord or his apostles, it is in such terms as the following. *Jesus* says, ‘The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil.’ *John* declares, ‘The whole world lieth in wickedness †.’

\* See above, p. 19—22.—Two things are objected to this statement: 1. It is like describing nature by its storms and tempests. [Letters, p. 79.] Be it so: if storms and tempests occur in any certain latitude every day, and throughout all the seasons, must we not conclude them natural to the climate?—2. Mankind are mixed characters, good as well as evil. [Letters, p. 94.] True; but scripture ascribes the bad to nature, and the good to grace. As to the case of children, [Letters, p. 91.] they are described as good only by comparison, or in a certain respect. ‘Folly (or sin) is bound up in the heart of a child,’ but it is gradually unfolded. Children are patterns of humility and docility, and with this view were recommended to the disciples. ‘Of such is the kingdom of heaven,’ means, probably, that the subjects of Christ’s kingdom must be regenerated, or born again, and thus become little children.

† John vii. 7.—1 John v. 19.

2. The

The other point to be considered is the *cause* of this depravity, whether it be the one, uniform, and simple cause assigned in scripture, or whether each individual is separately and distinctly contaminated and depraved. That it is the former, I conclude from the following considerations, most of which are recapitulatory.

(1.) Previous to the fall, I observe, that human nature is described in terms very different, and even opposite to what are employed afterwards. Then every thing created was pronounced very good; and man, in particular, to be created in the image of God, which is elsewhere said to consist, principally, in knowledge and in righteousness\*.

(2.) Sin and death are expressly said to have been introduced by our first parents; for ‘by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that [or *in whom*] all have sinned †.

3. Adam is frequently spoken of in scripture, not as a private isolated individual, but as a public person, the federal head of his

\* Above, p. 49.

† P. 222.

posterity.

posterity. In this view he is compared to Christ, the second Adam, by whom life and immortality are communicated to mankind, as death and misery by the former \*.

4. It is evident, notwithstanding your objections, that Adam's posterity do partake the consequences of his sin in labour, disease, and death, and that these constituted, at least, part of his punishment; and if involved in part of his punishment, why not in the whole? Indeed, it seems necessary to admit that we are some way implicated in his crime, from our being involved in his punishment, otherwise we must suppose that the Lord punishes the innocent with the guilty †:—and 'that be far from thee, O ' Lord!'—This argument is particularly forcible as it respects the case of Children ‡.

5. The misery and death suffered by the posterity of Adam, are represented in scripture as the proper 'wages,' or desert of sin. Whatever therefore may be this demerit, it seems entailed upon us as the proper reward of his transgression §.

\* Above, p. 229. † P. 227. ‡ P. 222.

§ P. 229.

6. We are represented as born in sin—children of wrath by nature—transgressors from the womb—depraved and defiled from the birth \*.

7. In consequence of this depravity, human nature is represented as prone to sin, and with a propensity to moral evil; so much so, as without converting grace to be incapable of receiving, understanding, or loving the things of God †.

8. Good men, under both dispensations, confessed and bewailed the remains of this corruption, which they describe as the source of a continual warfare within them, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh ‡.

9. The desperate condition of human nature by the fall, might be farther argued from the extraordinary provision made for its recovery in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of the Son of God: but as these articles are contested and denied by you, as well as the depravity I would infer from them, I cannot here justly avail myself of this topic.

\* P. 21, 231, &c. † P. 169.

‡ P. 29, 33, &c.



The principal objections urged by you, and by Mr. Belsham, have been also more or less considered and obviated. There is indeed, a certain class of objections to which I have judged it necessary to give the less attention, as they lie equally strong against the Necessarian as the Calvinistic System; and therefore cannot with propriety be urged by Unitarian Writers, who generally, if I mistake not, adopt that hypothesis. Those here referred to, are such as—the difficulty of shewing the equity of God in requiring purity unattainable in our depraved state—in punishing sin necessarily committed—or in inviting sinners to mercy which they cannot accept without his grace. These difficulties seem to arise from our present contracted powers and information; and are perhaps insurmountable without a new revelation, and enlarged capacities.

But it appears to me highly indecorous for creatures to contend with their Creator, and more so for sinners to dispute with their almighty Judge, or their compassionate Saviour. Let me, therefore, intreat you, Sir, and gentlemen of your sentiments, to speculate with more reverence and caution on these

these mysterious subjects. It is of little consequence in what terms you treat the observations or remonstrances of a fellow mortal. The potsherd may strive with the potsherds of the earth ; but woe unto him ‘ that striveth with his Maker \* !’

As to myself, Sir, though I am not intimidated by the idea of meeting you in the field of controversy, with the lawful weapons of scripture and sober reason, yet, to accompany you as a fellow suppliant at the throne of grace, would give far greater pleasure and satisfaction to

Your sincere and humble servant

for the Truth’s sake,

T. W.

\* Isa. xlv. 9:

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